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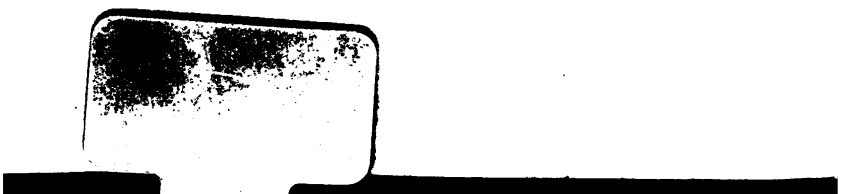

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VOL. IV.

CONTAINING

TWENTY YEARS AFTER;

OR,

The Further Feats and Fortunes of a Gascon Adventurer.

VOL. II.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF

ALEXANDER DUMAS.

LONDON:
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1846.

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BEING A SEQUEL TO

'THE THREE MUSKETEERS."

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TWENTY YEARS AFTER.

CHAPTER I.

THE TE DEUM FOR THE VICTORY AT LENS.

All that commotion which Queen Henrietta had observed, and of which she vainly sought the cause, was occasioned by the tidings of the victory of Lens, of which M. le Prince had made the Duke de Chatillon the bearer. The duke had distinguished himself greatly in the affair; and he was, besides, ordered to suspend from the ceiling of Notre-Dame, twenty-two standards, taken from the Lorraines and Spaniards.

This news was quite decisive, and at once determined, in favour of the court, the quarrel begun with the parliament. All the imposts so summarily registered, and which the parliament had opposed, had always been demanded for the ostensible purpose of upholding the honour of France, and with the fortuitous hope of beating the enemy. But, since Nordlingen, the army had only met with reverses; and the parliament had therefore openly questioned Mazarin respecting the victories so often promised, yet always deferred. Now, however, the troops had at last been engaged: they had triumphed, and their triumph was complete. Therefore every body quite understood that this was a double victory for the court —a victory in the interior, as well as on the frontiers; so much so, that even the young king, on hearing the news, exclaimed—"Ah! gentlemen of the parliament, we shall now see what you will say!"

This exclamation had so much delighted the queen, that she pressed to her bosom the royal child, whose haughty and indomitable

sentiments accorded so well with her own. A council was held the same evening, to which Marshal de la Meilleraie and M. de Villeroy had been summoned, because they adhered to Mazarin ; Chavigny and Seguier, because they hated the parliament ; and Guitaut and Comminges, because they were devoted to the queen.

The decision of the council had not transpired. It was only known, that, on the following Sunday, a *Te Deum* would be chanted at Notre-Dame, to celebrate the victory of Lens.

On the following Sunday, therefore, the Parisians awoke in high spirits. A *Te Deum* was, at that time, a grand affair : this ceremony had not then been abused, and therefore it produced its effects. The sun, which, on his side, appeared to participate in the fête, rose brilliant, and gilded the dark towers of the capital, already filled with an immense multitude of people ; the most obscure streets of the city had assumed a holiday air, and, throughout the entire length of the quays, long files of citizens and artisans, of women and children, were seen going towards Notre-Dame, like a river that rushes back to its source. The shops were deserted, and the houses shut: every one wished to see the young king and his mother, and the famous Cardinal Mazarin, whom they hated so much, that no one liked to be absent.

Besides, the greatest liberty reigned amid this vast assemblage. Every opinion was openly expressed ; and it might almost be said that insurrection sounded forth, whilst the thousand bells of the Parisian churches rung for the *Te Deum*. The police being under the control of the city itself, nothing threatening disturbed the union of general hatred, or curbed the expressions of those railing mouths.

Nevertheless, at eight o'clock in the morning, the regiment of the queen's guards, commanded by Guitaut, with Commainges, his nephew, as his second, had, with drums and trumpets at their head, been drawn up, from the Palais Royal to Notre-Dame—a manœuvre which the Parisians, always delighting in military music and glittering uniforms, had regarded with tranquillity.

Friquet was in his Sunday clothes ; and under the pretence of an inflammatory swelling, which he had established for the time by

introducing a number of cherry-stones into one corner of his mouth, he had obtained from Bazin, his superior, leave of absence for the whole day. Bazin had previously refused this leave, for Bazin was in bad humour; first, because Aramis had departed without telling him where he was going; and, next, because he was to attend a mass that was celebrated on account of a victory which did not accord with his own opinions. Bazin was a frondeur, it must be remembered; and if there had been any means by which the absence of a beadle could have been as easily effected as that of a simple chorister on such a solemn occasion, he would certainly have sent a request to the archbishop, similar to that which had just been made to himself. He had, therefore, as we have said, refused Friquet's first application; but the inflammatory swelling had, even in Bazin's presence, increased so much in size, that, for the honour of the body of choristers, which would have been compromised by such a deformity, he had finished by giving a grumbling assent. At the door of the church, Friquet had expectorated his inflammatory swelling, and at the same time made one of those impudent motions towards Bazin, which established the superiority of the Parisian Pickle over all the Pickles in the universe. As for his duties at the tavern, he had naturally enough got rid of them, by alleging that he was serving at a mass at Notre-Dame.

Friquet was therefore free, and, as we have said, had clothed himself in his most sumptuous garb; he had, more especially, as a remarkable ornament of his person, one of those indescribable caps, which hold an intermediate rank between the bonnet of the middle age, and the hat of Louis XIII. This curious headpiece had been fabricated for him by his mother; and, whether from caprice, or from a want of uniform materials, she had, in making it, shown herself so slightly attached to the harmony of colours, that this masterpiece of the haberdashery of the seventeenth century was yellow and green on one side, and white and red on the other. But Friquet, who had always loved variety in tones, was only the more proud of it, and the more triumphant.

On leaving Bazin, Friquet set off, as hard as he could run, towards the Palais Royal, which he reached just as the regiment of

guards was coming out; and as he went expressly to enjoy the sight, and to hear the music, he took his place at their head, beating the time with two pieces of slate; and occasionally changing from this exercise to that of the trumpet, which he could imitate most naturally with his mouth—in such a way, indeed, as to gain him the eulogiums of all the amateurs of imitative harmony.

This amusement lasted from the barrier des Sergents to the place Notre-Dame, and Friquet thoroughly enjoyed it. But when the regiment halted, and the companies, in opening out, penetrated even to the heart of the city, resting on the extremity of the rue St. Christophe, almost to the rue Cocatrix, where Broussel lived, then Friquet, remembering that he had not breakfasted, began to consider in what quarter he could best accomplish this most important business of the day; and having reflected a moment, he decided that the counsellor Broussel should bear the expenses of his repast. Consequently, away he went, reached the counsellor's door quite out of breath, and knocked loudly,

His mother, Broussel's old servant, opened the door. "What are you doing here, you rogue?" said she, "and why are you not at Notre-Dame?"

"I was there, Mother Nanette," said Friquet, "but I saw that some things were taking place that our master Broussel ought to know, and with M. Bazin's leave—you know M. Bazin, the beadle. Mother Nanette?—I am come to speak with M. Broussel."

"And what do you want to say to M. Broussel, you booby?"

"I wish to speak to him myself."

"That is impossible, for he is busy."

"Then I will wait," said Friquet, whom this plan suited much better, as he would take care to make good use of his time. And he began to mount the stairs with great rapidity, whilst Dame Nanette ascended more slowly behind him.

"But, after all, what do you want with M. Broussel?" said she.

"I want to tell him," replied Friquet, bawling as loud as he could, "that the whole regiment of guards is come into this quarter. Now, as I heard everywhere, that the court is ill-disposed towards him, I came to warn him, that he may put himself upon his guard.

Broussel heard the young rascal's loud voice, and, delighted at the excess of his zeal, he came down to the first story; for he was engaged in his cabinet, on the second floor.

"Ah, my friend," said he, "what is the regiment of guards to us? and are you not mad to make such a fuss? Do you not know that it is usual to act as these gentlemen have done, and that this regiment always lines the king's route?"

Friquet feigned astonishment, and twisting his new cap in his hands, he said, "It is not surprising that you know this, M. Broussel—you, who know everything; but as for me, how could I know it? I thought I was giving you some good advice; therefore you need not be angry with me for it, M. Broussel."

"Quite the contrary, my boy, quite the contrary, and your zeal pleases me. Dame Nanette, look for some of those apricots that Madame de Longueville sent us yesterday from Noisy, and give half a dozen of them, with a crust of nice bread, to your son."

"Ah! thank you, M. Broussel," said Friquet, "thank you; I am very fond of apricots."

Broussel then went to his wife, and joined her at breakfast. It was half-past nine. The counsellor seated himself near the window. The street was completely deserted; but at a distance was heard, like the noise of the approaching tide, the vast murmur of the popular waves, which were already accumulating round Notre-Dame.

This noise redoubled, when d'Artagnan, with a comany of musketeers, arrrived to place himself at the doors of Notre-Dame, to guard the service of the church. He had told Porthos to take advantage of the opportunity to witness the ceremony; and Porthos, in grand costume, and mounted on his handsomest horse, performed the character of an honorary musketeer, as d'Artagnan formerly had done himself. The sergeant of this company, an old soldier of the Spanish wars, who had recognised in Porthos an ancient comrade, had soon imparted to those under his command, the wonderful exploits of this giant, the pride of the ancient musketeers of M. de Treville. Porthos had therefore not only been well received by the company, but had even been regarded with admiration.

At ten o'clock, the cannon of the Louvre announced the departure of the king. A movement, resembling that of trees whose tops are bent and agitated by a strong wind, ran through the multitude, which waved backwards and forwards behind the motionless carbines of the guards. At last the king appeared, with the queen, in a gilded carriage, and followed by ten other carriages, filled with the ladies of honour, the officers of the royal household, and the whole court.

"Long live the king!" was the universal cry.

The young monarch put his head to the window with great gravity, made a little grimace sufficiently grateful, and even bowed slightly, which caused the shouts of the multitude to redouble.

The procession advanced very slowly, and took nearly half an hour to pass over the space that separates the Louvre from the place Notre-Dame. Having reached this spot it gradually entered beneath the vast roof of the sombre cathedral, and the sacred service commenced.

At the moment that the court took its place, a carriage, with the arms of Comminges, quitted the line of the court carriages, and went slowly to the end of the now deserted rue St. Christophe, where it stopped. Here four guards and an exempt, who escorted it, entered the cumbrous vehicle, and closed its blinds; then through a chink, carefully arranged, the exempt began to look down the rue Cocatrix, as if he expected some one.

Everybody was occupied with the ceremony, so that neither the carriage, nor the precautions taken by those who were in it, were observed. Friquet, whose ever-watchful eye alone could have penetrated it, had gone to relish his apricots on the cornice of a house in the court of Notre-Dame, from whence he saw the king, the queen, and Mazarin, and heard the mass quite as well as if he had been acting officially.

Towards the end of the service, the queen, seeing that Comminges was standing near, waiting for the confirmation of an order that she had already given him before quitting the Louvre, said to him in a low voice—"Go, Comminges, and may God prosper you."

Comminges immediately left the church, and went down the rue St. Christophe.

Friquet, who saw this handsome officer marching along, followed by two guards, amused himself by following him; and he did this with greater pleasure, as the ceremony was just finished, and the king was returning to his carriage.

Scarcely had the exempt seen Comminges make his appearance at the end of the street, before he gave an order to the coachman, who instantly set his machine in motion, and conducted it to Broussel's house. Comminges knocked at the door at the same moment that the carriage stopped at it.

Friquet waited behind Comminges for the opening of the door.

"What are you doing there, you young rascal?" demanded Comminges.

"I am waiting to go into Master Broussel's house, sir officer," replied Friquet, in that tone of simplicity which a Parisian Pickle knows so well how to assume when it suits his purpose.

"Then he really lives here?" said Comminges.

"Yes, sir."

"And what story does he occupy?"

"The whole house," replied Friquet: "the house is his own."

"But where does he generally transact business?"

"When he is engaged in his affairs, he is mostly in the second story; but he goes down to the first floor to take his meals; and at this time he must be at dinner, for it is twelve o'clock."

"Very well," said Comminges.

At this moment the door was opened. The officer questioned the lacquey, and learnt that M. Broussel was at home, and was, in fact, at dinner. Comminges therefore went up behind the lacquey, and Friquet behind Comminges.

Broussel was seated at table with his family, having his wife opposite him, his two daughters one on each side of him, and at the end of the table, his son Louvières, whom we have already seen entering at the time of the accident that had happened to the counsellor, from which accident, by the way, he was entirely recovered.

The good man, restored to perfect health, was tasting the fine fruit that Madame de Longueville had sent him.

Comminges, having arrested the lacquey's arm at the very moment that he was about to open the door to announce him, now opened it himself, and found himself in the presence of this family party.

On seeing the officer, Broussel felt himself somewhat agitated; but observing that he bowed politely, he arose, and bowed also. Nevertheless, in spite of this mutual politeness, anxiety was depicted on the countenances of the females; whilst Louvières turned very pale, and waited impatiently for the officer's explanation.

"Sir," said Comminges, "I am the bearer of an order from the king."

"Very well, sir," said Broussel: "what is that order?" And he held out his hand.

"I am instructed to take possession of your person, sir," replied Comminges, in the same tone of politeness; "and if you will take my word for it, you will spare yourself the trouble of reading this long letter, and will follow me."

Had a thunderbolt fallen into the midst of these good people, so peaceably met together, it could not have produced a more terrible effect. Broussel drew back, trembling violently. It was a fearful thing, at that period, to suffer imprisonment for the king's enmity. Louvières made a motion as if to procure his sword, which was on a chair in the corner of the room; but a glance from the good man Broussel's eye, who, in the midst of all this, did not lose his presence of mind, stopped this act of desperation. Madame Broussel, who was separated from her husband by the breadth of the table, burst into tears, and the two young girls held their father in their arms.

"Come, sir," said Comminges, "let us make haste: the king must be obeyed."

"Sir," replied Broussel, "I am in bad health; I cannot yield myself a prisoner in this state: I demand time."

"It is impossible," replied Comminges, "the order is positive, and must be executed immediately."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Louvières. "Take care, sir, that you do not drive us to desperation."

"Impossible!" cried a shrill voice at the end of the room

Comminges turned, and saw Dame Nanette, with her broom in her hand, and her eyes blazing with anger.

"My good Nanette," said Broussel, "be quiet now, I beseech you."

"I! I keep myself quiet, when they are arresting my master, the support, the liberator, the father of the poor people! Ah! yes, indeed! you know me well enough.—Will you go along with you?" said she to Comminges.

Comminges smiled.

"Come, sir," said he, turning towards Broussel, "silence this woman, and follow me."

"Silence me!—me!—me!" cried Nanette: "ah, yes, indeed! but it would require some one rather better than you, my fine king's-bird. You shall soon see!"

And Dame Nanette rushed towards the window, opened it, and, in a voice so piercing that it could be heard at Notre-Dame—"Help!" cried she: "they are arresting my master! They are arresting the counsellor Broussel! Help! help!"

"Sir," said Comminges, "tell me immediately—will you obey, or do you resist the orders of the king?"

"I obey, I obey, sir," exclaimed Broussel, endeavouring to release himself from his daughter's embraces, and, by his look, to check his son, who was every moment ready to escape him.

"In that case," said Comminges, "silence that old woman."

"Ah! old, indeed," screamed Nanette. And clinging to the bars of the window, she continued to scream, at the top of her voice, "Help, help, for Master Broussel, who is being arrested, for having defended the people! Help!"

Comminges seized hold of the servant, and endeavoured to force her from her post; but at this moment another voice, issuing from a sort of middle story, howled out, in a falsetto tone—

"Murder! fire! an assassin! They are killing M. Broussel! They are cutting M. Broussel's throat!"

It was Friquet's voice; and Dame Nanette, finding herself thus supported, renewed her cries with increased vigour, and joined in chorus.

Some curious heads already began to appear at the windows. The people, attracted to the end of the street, began to run; first one or two men; then groups; then a crowd. They heard the cries, they saw the carriage, but they understood nothing. Friquet jumped from the middle story on to the top of the carriage.

"They want to arrest M. Broussel!" he exclaimed: "there are guards in the carriage, and the officer is up stairs."

The crowd began to murmur, and surrounded the horses. The two guards who had remained in the passage now went up to assist Comminges, whilst those who were in the carriage opened the doors and crossed their pikes.

"There, do you see them?" cried Friquet: "do you see them? There they are?"

The coachman turned, and gave Friquet a cut with his whip that made him howl with pain.

"Ah, you devil's coachman," cried Friquet, "do you meddle with this business? Wait now!" And he regained his middle story, from which he assailed the coachman with all the projectiles he could find.

In spite of the hostile demonstrations of the guards, and probably on account of them, the people began to grumble, and went up to the horses; but the guards drove back the most violent with blows from their pikes. Nevertheless, the tumult continued to increase, and soon the street could no longer contain all the spectators, who flocked from every quarter. The crowd began to take possession of the space which the formidable pikes of the guards had formed between them and the carriage. The soldiers, hemmed in by a living wall, were just going to be crushed between the naves of the wheels, and the panels of the carriage—the cries of "in the king's name," twenty times repeated by the exempt, having had no effect upon this formidable crowd, which it appeared indeed only to exasperate the more—when, at the cry of "in the king's name!" a cavalier hastened up, and seeing the uniforms much ill-treated, he

threw himself into the fray, sword in hand, and brought an unlooked-for aid to the guard

This cavalier was a young man, from fifteen to sixteen years of age, who was pale with anger. He dismounted, like the other guards, set his back against the pole of the carriage, made a rampart of his horse, drew his pistols from his holsters, put them into his girdle, and then began to lay about him, like a man to whom the use of the sword was familiar. For ten minutes, alone and unsupported, he thus resisted every attack of the crowd.

Comminges was then seen, pushing Broussel before him

"Let us break the carriage to pieces." cried the people.

"Help?" screamed Nanette.

Murder!" cried Friquet, continuing to shower down upon the guards everything he could lay his hands upon.

"In the king's name!" exclaimed Comminges.

"The first man who advances is dead!" cried Raoul, who, finding himself much pressed upon, permitted a sort of giant, who was about to crush him, to taste the point of his sword, and who, feeling himself wounded, fell back howling dismally.

For it was Raoul, who, just returned from Blois, as he had promised the Count de la Fère, after an absence of five days, had wished to have a cursory view of the ceremony, and had come along the streets that would lead him more directly to Notre-Dame. Having reached the entrance of the rue Cocatrix, he had been carried along by the crowd; and, at the cry of "in the king's name!" he had remembered Athos's words—"serve the king;" and had run to fight for the king, whose guards were being ill-treated.

Comminges, as it were, threw Broussel into the carriage, and himself after him. At this moment a shot was fired, a ball passed through Comminges, hat, and broke the arm of one of the guards. Comminges raised his head, and, in the midst of the smoke, saw the threatening countenance of Louvières, who was looking out of the window of the second floor.

"Very well, sir," cried Comminges; "you will hear of me again!"

"And you also, sir," replied Louvières, "and we will then see who speaks the loudest!"

Friquet and Nanette still continued their roaring. Their cries, the noise of the shot, the smell of the powder, always so exciting, produced their effect.

"Death to the officer! death!" shouted the crowd. And there was a fearful movement.

"One step more," exclaimed Comminges, raising the blinds, that every one might see into the carriage, and applying his sword to Broussel's breast—"one step more, and I kill the prisoner! I am ordered to carry him away, alive or dead—I will take him away dead, that's all!"

A terrible cry was heard. The wife and daughters of Broussel, stretched our their supplicating hands to the people.

The people understood that this officer, so pale, yet who appeared so resolute, would do what he said. Therefore, although they continued to threaten, they drew back.

Comminges took the wounded guard into the carriage, and ordered the others to shut the door.

"To the palace!" said he to the coachman, who was more dead than alive.

He whipped his horses, who cleared a broad space in the crowd; but, on reaching the quay, they were obliged to stop: the carriage was upset, and the horses carried off, overpowered and bruised by the crowd.

Raoul, on foot—for he had not had time to remount his horse—tired of dealing blows with the flat of his sword, as the guards did with theirs, began to use the point; but this terrible and last resource only irritated the multitude. From time to time, also, the barrel of a carbine, or the blade of a sword, began to shine in the midst of the crowd. Some gun-shots were also heard, doubtless fired in the air, but whose echo did not the less make the heart vibrate; and projectiles continued to be showered from the windows, whilst voices were heard that are only heard in times of insurrection, and countenances were seen that are only seen in days of blood. The cries of "Death! death to the guards! Throw the officer into the river!" rose above all the tumult, vast as it was. Raoul, his hat battered in, and his face smeared with blood, felt that not only his strength,

but his senses, began to fail him. A reddish mist swam before his eyes; and through this mist he saw a hundred arms, stretched towards him, ready to seize him when he fell. Comminges was tearing his hair with rage in the overturned carriage. The guards, engaged as they were in defending their own persons, could assist no one. All was nearly over: carriage, horses, guards, attendants—nay, perhaps, even the prisoner himself—all were about to be torn to pieces, when suddenly a well-known voice sounded in Raoul's ears, and at the same instant a large sword was seen flashing in the air; the crowd gave way, torn, overthrown and crushed; an officer of the musketeers, cutting and slashing right and left, galloped up to Raoul, and caught him in his arms just as he was falling.

"Zounds!" cried the officer, "have they murdered him? The worse for them, if they have!"

And he turned round, so formidable in his strength, his rage, and his threatening appearance, that even the most violent of the rebels ran one over the other to escape him, and some even rolled into the Seine.

"M. d'Artagnan!" murmured Raoul.

"Yes, by Jove! *in propriâ personâ*, and luckily for you, it seems to me, my young friend. Here! you there!" he cried out, standing up in his stirrups, and raising his sword, as he beckoned to his musketeers, who had not been able to follow him, so impetuous had been his course—"come! sweep me away all this scum! To your carbines, men: make ready, present—"

But at this command, the mountains of people gave way so suddenly, that d'Artagnan could not restrain a burst of laughter, truly homeric.

'Thank you, d'Artagnan," said Comminges, showing half his body protruding out of the door of the prostrate carriage: "thank you also, young gentleman. Give me your name, that I may report it to the queen."

Raoul was about to reply, when d'Artagnan bent down to his ear. "Hold your tongue," said he; "let me answer."

Then, turning towards Comminges—"Do not lose any time,

Comminges," he continued: "get out of the carriage if you can, and order another to be procured."

"But where am I to find one?"

"By Jove! take the first that may happen to pass over the Pont-Neuf: those who may be in it will be but too happy, I hope, to lend their carriage for the king's service."

"But," said Comminges, "I do not know—"

"Go along, then, or in five minutes all these mad fools will return with swords and muskets, when you will be killed, and your prisoner rescued. Go! And see—yonder comes a carriage." Then leaning down again to Raoul: "by no means tell him your name," he whispered.

The youth looked at him with an air of astonishment.

"Very well, I am off," said Comminges; "and should they return, fire upon them."

"No, no," answered d'Artagnan; "on the contrary, let no one stir: one shot fired now, would be dearly paid for to-morrow."

Comminges took his four guards, and the same number of musketeers, and ran to the carriage. He made those who were in it get out, and brought it up to the broken vehicle. But when, in removing Broussel from the one to the other, the people saw him whom they called their liberator, they uttered terrible cries, and again rushed towards the carriage.

"Be off with you," said d'Artagnan. Here are ten musketeers to attend you, and I will keep twenty to check the people. Be off, and do not lose a single instant. Ten men for M. Comminges!"

Ten men detached themselves from the troop, surrounded the carriage, and set off at a gallop.

At the departure of the carriage, the cries were redoubled. More than ten thousand people were assembled upon the quay, blocking up the Pont-Neuf, and the adjacent streets. Some shots were fired, and a musketeer was wounded.

"Forward!" cried d'Artagnan, driven beyond patience, and biting his moustache. And with his twenty men he made such a charge upon the people, as overthrew them in utter confusion and dismay.

One man alone kept his ground, with an arquebus in his hand.

"Ah!" said that man, "it was you who before wanted to murder him! Wait now!" and he lowered his arquebus towards d'Artagnan, who was coming on at full gallop.

D'Artagnan bent down to his horse's neck. The young man fired: the ball cut the plume of his hat. The horse, bounding forward at full speed, struck against this rash individual, who thus singly endeavoured to stay the tempest, and sent him staggering against the wall.

D'Artagnan pulled his horse up on his haunches, and, whilst his musketeers continued their charge, he returned, with his sword raised over him whom he had overthrown.

"Ah, sir," exclaimed Raoul, who recognised the young man, from having seen him in the rue Cocatrix, "spare him, sir, for it is his son!"

D'Artagnan arrested his arm, about to strike:—"Ah! you are his son," said he: "that's quite another thing."

"I surrender, sir," said Louvières, holding out his discharged arquebus to the officer.

"Eh! No, do not give yourself up; but, on the contrary, run off with you, and that quickly. If I take you, you will certainly be hanged."

The young man did not wait to be told twice: he passed under the horse's neck, and disappeared at the corner of the rue Guénégaud.

"Faith," said d'Artagnan to Raoul, "it was time for you to stop my hand: in another moment he would have been a dead man; and, by my faith, when I had learnt who it was, I should have been very sorry that I had killed him."

"Ah, sir," said Raoul, "allow me, after having thanked you for this poor fellow, to thank you for myself; for I also was just going to be killed, when you arrived."

"Be quiet, young man, and do not fatigue yourself with talking." Then, drawing a flask of Spanish wine from one of his holsters—"There," said he, "drink a couple of mouthfuls of this."

Raoul drank, and wished to repeat his thanks.

"Hush!" said d'Artagnan, "we will talk about that by and by."

Then, seeing that the musketeers had cleared the quay, from the Pont-Neuf to the quay St. Michel, and that they were returning, he raised his sword for them to quicken their pace. The musketeers came up at a trot; and at the same time, from the other side of the quay, the ten men whom d'Artagnan had sent as the escort of Comminges, were seen returning.

"Halloo!" cried he to the latter, "did anything fresh happen?"

"Yes, sir," replied the sergeant; "the carriage broke down again: it was a regular fatality."

D'Artagnan shrugged his shoulders. "They are sad awkward fellows," said he. "When a carriage is chosen, it ought to be a strong one: the carriage with which a Broussel is arrested, ought to be able to carry ten thousand men."

"What are your orders, lieutenant?" demanded the sergeant.

"Take the detachment, and lead it to quarters."

"But you—do you retire alone?"

"Certainly; do you suppose that I require an escort?"

"But nevertheless——"

"Go, then."

The musketeers departed, and d'Artagnan remained alone with Raoul. "Now, are you in pain?" said he to him.

"Yes, sir; my head is heavy and burning."

"Come, let us see what is the matter with that head," said d'Artagnan, raising his hat: "ah! a contusion."

"Yes, I believe that I received a flower-pot on the top of my head."

"The curs!" said d'Artagnan. "But you have got spurs on—were you on horseback?"

"Yes; but I dismounted to defend M. Comminges, and my horse was captured. But look! there he is!"

In fact, at that moment, Raoul's horse passed by, mounted by Friquet, who was galloping along, waving his four-coloured cap, and crying out—"Broussel! Broussel!"

"Halloo! stop you rascal!" exclaimed d'Artagnan, "and bring that horse here."

Friquet heard well enough, but he pretended not to hear, and endeavoured to continue his course.

D'Artagnan had for a moment a great desire to ride after Master Friquet; but, as he did not wish to leave Raoul alone, he contented himself with drawing a pistol from his holsters, and cocking it.

Friquet had a quick eye and a sharp ear: he saw d'Artagnan's movement, and heard the sound of the lock; he therefore suddenly drew up his horse. "Ah! it is you, sir officer," said he, coming up to d'Artagnan: "I am really very glad to meet you."

D'Artagnan looked earnestly at Friquet, and recognised the waiter of the rue de la Calandre. "Ah! is it you, young rascal?" said he, "come here."

"Yes, it is me, sir officer," replied Friquet, with his innocent look.

"You have changed your employment then? You are no longer either a young chorister or a waiter at a tavern? You are now a horse stealer?"

"Ah, sir," said Friquet, "how can you say so? I was looking for the gentleman to whom the horse belongs—a handsome cavalier, brave as Cæsar—[he then pretended to see Raoul for the first time] —"Ah! well, surely I am not mistaken," he continued—"there is the gentleman, I do declare. You will remember the boy, will you not, sir?"

Raoul put his hand into his pocket.

"What are you going to do?" said d'Artagnan.

"To give ten livres to this brave boy," replied Raoul, drawing a pistole from his pocket.

"A good thrashing rather!" said d'Artagnan. "Be off with you, you young scoundrel, and remember that I have your address."

Friquet, who did not expect to get off so easily, made but one jump from the quay to the rue Dauphine, where he vanished. Raoul mounted his horse, and they both went at a slow pace, d'Artagnan guarding the youth as if he had been his own son, towards the rue Triquetonne.

All the way there were many low murmurs, and distant threats; but at the sight of the officer, with his military aspect, and his

powerful sword, suspended from his wrist by its thong, the crowd gave way, and no serious attack was made on the two horsemen, who reached the hotel de la Chevrette without accident.

The fair Madeline informed d'Artagnan that Planchet was returned, accompanied by Mousqueton, who had borne the extraction of the ball most heroically, and was as well as could be expected.

D'Artagnan then ordered Planchet to be called; but Planchet did not respond to these calls: he had, in fact, disappeared.

"Some wine, then," said d'Artagnan.

When the wine was brought, and d'Artagnan was alone with Raoul—"You are mighty well satisfied with yourself, are you not?" said he, looking hard at him.

"Why, yes," replied Raoul, "it appears to me that I have done my duty. Have I not defended the king?"

"And who told you to defend the king?"

"The Count de la Fère himself."

"Yes, the king. But this day you have not defended the king —you have defended Mazarin, which is not the same thing."

"But, sir"—

"You have done a very foolish thing, young man—you have interfered in matters which did not concern you."

"Nevertheless, you yourself—"

"Oh, I! That is quite another thing: I have obeyed my captain's orders. Your captain is M. le Prince: understand this well—you have no other. But did any one see this giddy pate," continued d'Artagnan, "who must go and make himself a cardinalist, and help to arrest Broussel! Do not breathe a word of this upon any account, or the Count de la Fère would be furious."

"And do you think that the count would be angry with me, sir?"

"Do I think it? I am quite sure of it; otherwise, I should thank you, for you have been working for us. Therefore it is that I scold you, on this proper occasion; the storm, believe me, will be more gentle. Besides, my dear boy," added d'Artagnan, "I make use of the privilege that your guardian has conceded to me."

"I do not understand you, sir," said Raoul.

D'Artagnan arose, went to his desk, took out a letter, and gave it to Raoul.

When Raoul had run over its contents he became agitated. "Oh, my God!" said he, raising his fine eyes, moist with tears, to d'Artagnan's face, "then the count has quitted Paris?"

"He left it four days ago," replied d'Artagnan.

"But the letter indicates, that he is incurring a mortal danger."

"He incur a mortal danger! You may make yourself quite easy on that score. No; he is journeying on momentous affairs, and will soon return. In the meantime I hope you have no objection to acknowledge me as your temporary guardian?"

"Oh, no, M. d'Artagnan—you are so brave, and the count loves you so dearly!"

"Well, then, you must love me too; I will not plague you much; but this is on condition that you are a frondeur, my young friend, and a warm frondeur too."

"But may I continue to see Madame de Chevreuse?"

"Most assuredly; and the coadjutor, and Madame de Longueville also; and if the good man Broussel were there, to whose arrest you so giddily contributed, I would say to you, go and make your excuses to M. Broussel as quickly as you can, and kiss him on both cheeks."

"Well, sir, I will obey you, although I do not understand you."

"There is no necessity for your understanding me. See," said d'Artagnan turning towards the door, which then opened, "there comes M. du Vallon, with his clothes torn."

"Yes," said Porthos, dripping with perspiration, and covered with dust, "but in exchange, I have torn a good many skins. Those beggarly fellows wanted to take away my sword. Zounds! what a popular commotion!" continued the giant, with his tranquil air; "but I settled more than twenty of them with the pommel of Balizarde.—A thimbleful of wine, d'Artagnan?"

"Oh, I will answer for you!" said the Gascon, filling Porthos's glass to the brim. "But, when you have drank, I want your opinion."

Porthos tossed off the glass of wine, and when he had replaced

the glass on the table, and sucked his moustache—"upon what?" said he.

"Why," replied d'Artagnan, "here is M. de Bragelonne, who wanted to assist in the arrest of M. Broussel, with all his might, and whom I had great difficulty in preventing from defending M. Comminges."

"The deuce!" said Porthos; "and what would the guardian say, if he heard this?"

"There, do you hear?" broke in d'Artagnan. "Be a frondeur, my friend; and remember that I am the count's representative in everything." And he shook his purse. Then, turning towards his companion—"Are you coming, Porthos?" said he.

"Where?" demanded Porthos, pouring out another glass of wine.

"To pay our respects to the cardinal."

Porthos swallowed the second glass, with the same serenity that he had swallowed the first, took up his hat, that he had laid upon a chair, and followed d'Artagnan.

As for Raoul, he remained quite astounded at what he had seen, d'Artagnan having forbidden him to quit that room until all the commotion was appeased.

CHAPTER II.

THE MENDICANT OF ST. EUSTACHE.

D'Artagnan had calculated on what he was doing, by not going immediately to the Palais Royal: he had allowed Comminges ample time to precede him there, and, consequently, to inform the cardinal of the eminent services which he and his friend had that morning rendered the queen's party. They were, therefore, both most favourably received by Mazarin, who paid them abundance of compliments, and told them that each of them had made great progress towards the accomplishment of his object—that is to say, d'Artagnan of his captaincy, Porthos of his barony.

D'Artagnan would have much preferred ready money to all this, for he well knew that Mazarin was liberal enough of his promises, but very slow in performing them. He therefore considered these promises only as meagre fare, although he did not appear the less satisfied to Porthos, whom he was fearful of discouraging.

Whilst the two friends were with the cardinal, the queen sent for him. The cardinal thought that it would redouble the zeal of his two defenders, if he were to procure for them the queen's personal thanks; he therefore made them a sign to follow him. D'Artagnan and Porthos pointed to their torn and dusty dresses, but the cardinal shook his head.

"These garments," said he, "are of more value than those of most of the courtiers you will find with the queen, for they are the dress of battle."

D'Artagnan and Porthos obeyed.

The court of Anne of Austria was numerous, and in excellent spirits: for, in reality, after having gained a victory over the Spaniards, they had just acquired another over the people. Broussel had been carried out of Paris without resistance, and, by this time, was probably in the prison of St. Germain; whilst Blancmesnil, who had been arrested at the same time, but without disturbance or difficulty, must be already enrolled amongst the inmates of the chateau of Vincennes.

Comminges was close to the queen, who was questioning him as to the particulars of his expedition; and every one was listening to his recital, when he perceived at the door, and behind the cardinal, who was just entering, d'Artagnan and Porthos.

"Ah, madame," said he, running up to d'Artagnan, "here is one who can tell you this better than I can, for he is my preserver. Without him, I should probably at this very moment be caught in the nets at St. Cloud; for they threatened nothing less than to throw me into the river. Speak, d'Artagnan, speak!"

From the time that he had been lieutenant of musketeers, d'Artagnan had been perhaps a hundred times in the same room with the queen, but never had she spoken to him,

"Well, sir," said she, "after having rendered me such a service, are you silent?"

"Madame," replied d'Artagnan, "I have nothing to say, except that my life is at the service of your majesty, and that I shall only be too happy in sacrificing it for you."

"I know that, sir," said the queen; "I have known it for a long time. I am therefore delighted at the opportunity of thus giving you this public mark of my esteem and gratitude."

"Permit me, madame," said d'Artagnan, "to transfer a portion of it to my friend, like myself, an ancient musketeer of M. de Treville's company. He was called Porthos—[the queen started]—but his real name is the Chevalier du Vallon."

"De Bracieux de Pierrefonds," added Porthos.

"These names are too numerous for me to remember them all, and I only wish to recollect the first," said the queen, most graciously.

Porthos bowed. D'Artagnan stepped back two paces. And at this moment the coadjutor was announced.

There was an exclamation of surprise in the royal assembly. Although the coadjutor had preached that morning, it was well known that he had a strong leaning towards the fronde; and Mazarin, by requesting the Archbishop of Paris to make his nephew preach, had evidently meant to give M. de Retz one of those sly Italian thrusts which so much delighted him.

In fact, on leaving Notre-Dame, the coadjutor had heard of what had happened. Although pretty well involved with the principal frondeurs, he was not so much so but that he could draw back, if the court should offer the advancement of which he was ambitious, and to which the office of coadjutor was but a stepping-stone. M. de Retz wished to succeed his uncle as archbishop, and to be a cardinal, like Mazarin. Therefore, as it was very difficult for the popular party to grant him these truly regal favours, he betook himself to the palace, to pay his compliment to the queen on the battle of Lens, but resolved, beforehand, to act for or against the court, according as that compliment was ill or well received.

The coadjutor was therefore announced: he entered; and, on his

appearance, the curiosity of all that triumphant court redoubled, to hear his words.

The coadjutor had, for his own share alone, pretty nearly as much talent as was possessed by all those who were there united to laugh at him. Therefore his speech was so skilfully guarded, that, whatever desire the courtiers had to laugh, they could find nothing to lay hold of; and he concluded by saying, that he offered his feeble services to her majesty.

The queen appeared to be much pleased with the coadjutor's harangue; but the harangue having terminated with the only phrase that exposed him to the attack of the courtiers, Anne turned herself round, and, by an almost imperceptible glance of her eye towards her favourites, apprised them that she gave the coadjutor up to them. Instantly the wits of her court began to launch forth their satire. Nogent-Beautru, the buffoon of the household, exclaimed that the queen was very fortunate in finding the aids of religion at such a moment.

Every one burst into laughter.

The Duke de Villeroy declared, "that he did not know how any one could now entertain a moment's fear, since, to defend the court against the parliament and the citizens of Paris, they had the coadjutor, who, by a wave of his hand, could levy an army of curés, of Swiss, and of beadles."

The Marshal de la Meilleraie added, "That, in case they came to blows, and the coadjutor should himself be engaged, it was very annoying that M. le Coadjutor could not be distinguished in the battle by a red hat, as Henry IV. was, at the battle of Ivry, by his white plume."

Gondy remained calm and serene amid this storm, which he could so easily render deadly to the railers. The queen then inquired if he had anything to add to the eloquent speech he had just concluded.

"Yes, madame," replied the coadjutor, "I have to entreat you to reflect twice before you excite a civil war in the realm."

The queen turned her back upon him, and the laughter was renewed.

The coadjutor bowed, and left the palace, bestowing on the cardinal, who was looking at him, one of those glances which are well understood between mortal enemies. This glance was so bitter, that it penetrated even to the heart of Mazarin, who, seeing that it was a declaration of war, seized d'Artagnan by the arm, and said to him—

"On a proper occasion, sir, you would be able to recognise that man who is just gone out, would you not?"

"Yes, your excellence," he replied.

Then d'Artagnan, turning towards Porthos, said—"The fiend! This is a bad business: I do not like quarrels between churchmen."

Gondy retired, scattering his benedictions on all he met in his path, and enjoying the malignant pleasure of making all, even to the servants of his enemies, fall on their knees before him.

"Oh!" he muttered, as he passed the threshold of the palace, "ungrateful, perfidious, and pusillanimous court, to-morrow I will make you laugh, but it will then be in another tone!"

Whilst the courtiers thus abandoned themselves to the follies and extravagances of joy, in order to feed the queen's hilarity, Mazarin, a man of sense, and who had also all the prudence of fear, did not waste his time in vain and dangerous pleasantries. He had left the court after the coadjutor, had balanced his accounts, locked up his money, and caused some secret hiding-places to be fabricated in the walls, by workmen in whom he could confide.

On returning to his house, the coadjutor was informed that a young man, who had come in after his departure, was now waiting for him. He inquired the name of this young man, and started with joy on learning that it was Louvières. He immediately hastened to his cabinet, where he found Broussel's son, yet furious and bloody from his struggle with the king's troops. The only precaution he had taken, in entering the archbishop's palace, was to leave his arquebus at the house of a friend.

The coadjutor went up, and held out his hand to him. The young man looked at him as if he wished to read the inmost recesses of his heart.

"My dear M. Louvières," said the coadjutor, "believe me that

I sympathize sincerely with the misfortune that has befallen you."

"Is that true, and do you speak seriously?" said Louvières.

"From the bottom of my heart," replied Gondy.

"In that case, your excellence," said Louvières, "the time for words is past, and that for action is arrived. Your excellence, if you wish it, my father will be out of prison in three days, and in six months you will be a cardinal."

The coadjutor started.

"Come, let us speak plainly," said Louvières, "let us play with all our cards on the table. No one scatters thirty thousand crowns in alms, as you have done in the last six months, from pure Christian charity: that would be too exalted. You are ambitious—that is the simple fact; you are a man of talent, and know your own value. I hate the court, and at this present moment I have but one sole desire, and that is vengeance. Give us the clergy and the people, whom you have at your disposal, and I will give you the citizens and the parliament. With these four elements, in eight days Paris will be our own; and believe me, M. le Coadjutor, that the court will give from fear, what it would not grant from favour."

The coadjutor looked at Louvières with his piercing eye. "But M. Louvières, do you know that it is simply and plainly civil war that you are proposing to me?"

"Your excellence has been preparing for it long enough, to make it welcome whenever it comes."

"Never mind," said the coadjutor; "but you understand, that this calls for reflection."

"And how many hours' reflection do you require?"

"Twelve—is that too long, sir?"

"It is now noon—at midnight I will return here."

"If I should not be returned, wait for me."

"Very well. At midnight, your excellence."

"At midnight, my dear M. Louvières."

When alone, Gondy summoned all the curés with whom he had any connexion. In two hours he had assembled thirty curés of the most populous, and, consequently, the most turbulent parishes of

Paris. Gondy apprised them of the insult he had just received at the Palais Royal, and repeated the jibes of Beautin, of the Duke de Villeroy, and of Marshal Meilleraie. The curés demanded what they should do?

"It is very simple," replied the coadjutor. "You direct all the consciences. Well, then, undermine that wretched prejudice of fear and respect for kings; tell your flocks that the queen is a tyrant; and declare, so loudly that all may hear it, that the misfortunes of France come from Mazarin, her lover and corrupter. Commence your labours this very day, in fact, instantaneously, and, in three days, I expect you will see the result. Besides, if any one of you has any good advice to give me, let him remain, and I will listen to him with pleasure."

Three of the curés remained—those of St. Méry, of St. Sulpice, and of St. Eustache. The others retired.

"You therefore think that you can aid me more efficaciously than your brethren?" said Gondy.

"We hope so," replied the curés.

"Come, then, let the minister of St. Méry begin."

"Your excellence, I have, in my parish, a man who could render you the greatest service."

"Who is this man?"

"A shopkeeper in the rue des Lombards, who has the greatest influence over the little commercial body of his neighbourhood."

"What is his name?"

"His name is Planchet: he alone excited a commotion about six weeks ago; but, at the termination of it, as he was sought for to be hanged, he disappeared."

'And can you find him again?

I hope so. I do not think that he was arrested; and, as I am his wife's confessor, if she knows where he is, I shall ascertain it."

"Very well, M. le Curé, hunt up this man for me, and should you find him, bring him here."

"At what hour, your excellence?"

"At six o'clock—will that do?"

"We will be with your excellence at six o'clock."

"Go, my dear curé, go, and may God assist you!"

The curé left the room.

"And you, sir," said Gondy, turning to the curé of St. Sulpice.

"I, your excellence," said he, "I know a man who has rendered great services to a very popular prince; he would make an excellent leader of rebels, and I could place him at your disposal."

"And what is the name of this man?"

"The Count de Rochefort."

"I also know him; but, unfortunately, he is not in Paris"

"Your excellence, he is in the rue Cassette."

"How long has he been there?"

"For three days."

"Why, then, has he not been here to see me?"

"They told him—will your excellence pardon me?"

"Certainly; speak."

"That your excellence was much disposed to treat with the court."

Gondy bit his lips. "He was deceived," said he: "bring him here at eight o'clock, M. le Curé; and may God bless you, as I do."

The second curé bowed, and left the room.

"It is now your turn, sir," said the coadjutor, addressing the last that remained. "Have you as good advice to offer me, as the two gentlemen who have just left us?"

"Better, your excellence."

"Indeed! Reflect that you are taking upon yourself a vast obligation. One has offered me a shopkeeper, the other a count: are you, then, going to offer me a prince?"

"I am going to offer you a beggar, your excellence."

"Aha!" said Gondy, reflecting: "you are right, M. le Curé—some one who would excite all that legion of beggars who cumber the thoroughfares of Paris, and who would know how to make them cry, loud enough for all France to hear them, that it is Mazarin who has reduced them to the wallet."

"Exactly so. I have got your man."

"Bravo! And who is the man?"

"A simple mendicant, as I have told your excellence, who solicits

alms, whilst he distributes holy water on the steps of the church of St. Eustache, and has done so for about six years."

"And you say, that he has a great influence over his fellows?"

"Is your excellence aware that mendicity is an organized body —a kind of association, of those who possess nothing, against those who possess something—an association, in which each contributes a share, and which depends upon a chief?"

"Yes, I have heard so," replied the coadjutor.

"Well, then, this man of whom I speak is the syndic-general."

"And what do you know of this man?"

"Nothing, your excellence, except that he appears to be tormented by some remorse of conscience?"

"What reason have you to think so?"

"On the 28th of every month, he makes me say a mass for the repose of the soul of some person, who died a violent death; and yesterday I repeated that mass."

"And his name is—"

"Maillard; but I do not believe that that is his real name."

"And do you think that we should at present find him at his post?"

"Yes, certainly."

"Come, then, let us see your mendicant, M. le Curé; and if he be such as you represent him, you are right—you have found the real treasure."

And Gondy dressed himself as a cavalier, put on his head a large hat with a red plume, girded a long sword to his loins, put spurs upon his boots, enveloped himself in an ample cloak, and followed the curé.

The coadjutor and his companion traversed all the streets that separated the archbishop's palace from the church of St. Eustache, studying attentively the feelings of the populace. The people were certainly excited; but, like a swarm of bees in commotion, they appeared not to know on what place to settle; and it was evident, that, unless leaders were found for this people, all would pass by, and evaporate in murmurs.

On reaching the rue des Prouvaires, the curé stretched out his

hand towards the porch of the church. "Behold," said he: "there he is, at his post."

Gondy looked at the spot indicated, and perceived a beggar seated on a chair, with his back against one of the mouldings. He had a little pail near him, and held a holy water sprinkler in his hand.

"Is he privileged to sit there?" inquired Gondy.

"No, your excellence," replied the curé; "he purchased the privilege of giving holy water from his predecessor."

"Bought it?"

"Yes, such places are purchased; and I believe that this man paid a hundred pistoles for his."

"The rascal is rich, then?"

"Some of these men leave, at their death, from twenty to thirty thousand livres, and even more."

"Hum!" said Gondy, laughing; "I did not imagine that I bestowed my alms so well."

In the meantime they went towards the porch. At the moment that the coadjutor and the curé placed their feet on the first step of the church, the mendicant rose up, and held out his holy water sprinkler. He was a man of about sixty-six or sixty-eight years of age, short, rather corpulent, with gray hair, and yellow bilious eyes. The expression of his countenance denoted a struggle between two contending principles—a bad disposition, tamed down and subdued by the will, or perhaps by repentance. On seeing the cavalier who accompanied the curé, he started slightly, and looked at him with astonishment.

The curé and the coadjutor touched the holy water with the end of their fingers, making the sign of the cross; the coadjutor threw a piece of money into the mendicant's hat, which was on the ground.

"Maillard," said the curé, "this gentleman and I are come to talk a minute or two with you."

"With me!" said the mendicant: "it is a great honour for a poor holy water giver."

There was a tone of irony in the beggar's voice that he could not entirely suppress, and that surprised the coadjutor.

"Yes," said the curate, who appeared accustomed to that accent —"yes, we wished to ascertain your opinion on the events that happened to-day, and what you have heard the people say, as they went in and out of the church."

The mendicant shook his head. "These are sad events, M. le Curé, and, as they always do, will fall heavily on the poor people. As for what is said about it, all the world is dissatisfied, and every body complains; but what all the world thinks, no one says individually."

"Explain yourself, my friend," said the coadjutor.

"I say, that all these cries, all these complaints, all these maledictions, will only produce storms and lightnings—that is all; for the thunder will never fall, till there be a leader to direct it."

"My friend," said Gondy, "you seem to me to be a sensible man. Would you be disposed to mix yourself up with a little civil war, should we by chance have one, and to place at the disposal of this leader, should we find one, that personal power and influence which you have acquired over your comrades?"

"Yes, sir, provided the civil war you allude to were approved of by the church, and, consequently, might conduct me to the end that I wish to attain—that is to say, the remission of my sins."

"This war will not only be approved of, but directed by her," replied the coadjutor. "As for the remission of your sins, we have the archbishop of Paris, who holds vast powers from the court of Rome, and even the coadjutor, who possesses particular indulgences. We will recommend you to them."

"Consider, Maillard," said the curé, "that it is I who have recommended you to this gentleman, who is a powerful nobleman, and who has, in some measure, answered for you."

"I know, M. le Curé," replied the mendicant, "that you have always been an excellent friend to me; therefore I, on my part, am disposed to oblige you."

"And do you believe your power to be as great over your community, as you told me awhile ago?"

"I think that they have a certain regard for me," said the mendicant, with pride; "and that not only will they do what I order them, but that they will follow me wherever I go."

"And can you answer for fifty resolute men—good souls, idle, and well-disposed—bawlers, capable of lowering the walls of the Palais Royal, by crying, 'Down with Mazarin!' as the walls of Jericho fell in old times?"

"I believe," replied the mendicant, "that much more difficult and more important things than that may be entrusted to me."

"Ah!" said Gondy, "would you undertake, then, to erect about ten barricades in one night?"

"I will undertake to form fifty, and, when daylight comes, to defend them also."

"By Jove!" said Gondy, "you speak with a confidence that delights me; and, since M. le Curé answers for you—"

"I answer for him," said the curé.

"Here is a bag, containing five hundred and fifty pistoles in gold: arrange all your plans, and tell me where I can find you at ten o'clock to-night."

"It ought to be on an elevated spot, from which a signal may be seen in every quarter of Paris."

"Would you like me to give you an order on the vicar of St. Jacques la Boucherie? He will put you into one of the chambers in the tower," said the curé.

"That will do admirably," replied the mendicant.

"Then," said the coadjutor, "this evening, at ten o'clock; and should I be satisfied with you, you shall have another bag of five hundred pistoles."

The mendicant's eyes shone with avidity, but he checked the feeling. "This evening, sir," said he, "everything shall be ready."

And he carried his chair into the church, set his pail and sprinkler near the chair, went and took some holy water from the large receptacle, as if he had no confidence in his own, and left the church.

CHAPTER III.

THE TOWER OF ST. JACQUES LA BOUCHERIE.

At a quarter to six o'clock, M. de Gondy had transacted all his business, and returned to the archbishop's palace. At six o'clock the curé of St. Méry was announced. The coadjutor looked eagerly behind the curé, and saw that he was followed by another man.

"Show him in," said he.

The curé entered, and Planchet with him.

"Your excellence," said the curé, "here is the person whom I had the honour to mention to you."

Planchet bowed, with the air of a man who had been accustomed to good society.

"And you are disposed to serve the cause of the people?" demanded Gondy.

"I believe so, indeed," replied Planchet; "I am a frondeur from the soul. Such as you now see me, your excellence, I am condemned to be hanged."

"And for what?"

"I rescued a nobleman from the hands of Mazarin's soldiers, who were carrying him back to the Bastile, where he had been five years."

"And his name?"

"Oh, your excellence, you know it well enough: it is the Count de Rochefort."

Ah, yes, indeed!" said the coadjutor; "I have heard of that affair. I was informed that you raised the whole neighbourhood."

"Pretty nearly so," answered Planchet, with an air of self-satisfaction.

"And your business is—"

"A pastry-cook, in the rue des Lombards."

"Explain to me how, in carrying on such a peaceful occupation, you have such warlike propensities."

"Why does your excellence, being a churchman, now receive

me in the dress of a cavalier, with a sword by your side, and spurs on your boots?"

"Not badly answered, by my faith," said Gondy, laughing. "But you know, that, in spite of my band, my inclinations were always warlike.

"Well, then, your excellence, before I was a pastry-cook, I was three years a sergeant in the regiment of Piedmont; and, before that, I was for eighteen months lacquey to M. d'Artagnan."

"The lieutenant of musketeers?" demanded Gondy.

"The same, your excellence."

"But he is said to be a violent cardinalist."

"Phew!" said Planchet.

"What do you mean?"

"Nothing, your excellence. M. d'Artagnan is in the service, and it is M. d'Artagnan's business to defend Mazarin, who pays him, as it is the business of us citizens to attack Mazarin, who robs us."

"You are an intelligent fellow, my friend. Can I depend upon you?"

"I thought," said Planchet, "that the curé had answered for me."

"True; but I wish to receive the assurance from your own mouth."

"You may depend upon me, your excellence, provided you wish to cause an insurrection in the city."

"That is exactly the case. How many men do you think you can collect in the night?"

"Two hundred muskets, and five hundred halberts."

"If there were only a man in every quarter who could do the same, we should have a pretty strong army."

"Yes, indeed."

"Would you be willing to obey the Count de Rochefort?"

"I would follow him to hell—and that is not saying a little—for I think he is capable of going down there."

"Bravo!"

"By what sign can we distinguish friends from enemies to-morrow?"

"Every frondeur might put a bunch of straw in his hat."

"Very well; let your excellence give the order."

"Do you require any money?"

"Money never does harm in anything, your excellence. If we have it not, we will do without it; but if we have it, why then things will perhaps go on faster and better."

Gondy went to a desk, and drew forth a bag. "Here are five hundred pistoles," said he; "and if everything goes on well you may reckon on a like sum."

"I will render a faithful account of this sum, your excellence," said Planchet, putting the bag under his arm.

"Very well; I recommend the cardinal to your attention."

"Be quite easy: he is in good hands."

Planchet left the room. The curé remained.

"Are you satisfied, your excellence?" said he.

"Yes; this man has the appearance of a resolute fellow."

"He will do more than he has promised."

"That is excellent."

And the curé rejoined Planchet, who was waiting for him on the staircase. Ten minutes afterwards, the curé of St. Sulpice was announced. The moment the door was opened, a man rushed in: it was the Count de Rochefort.

"It is you, then, my dear count!" cried Gondy, holding out his hand to him.

"You are, therefore, at length decided, your excellence," said Rochefort.

"I have always been so," replied Gondy.

"Well, let us speak no more about that: you say so, and I believe you. So we are going to give Mazarin a ball?"

"The invitations are for this evening," replied the coadjutor, "but the musicians will not begin to play till to-morrow morning."

"You may count upon me, with fifty soldiers, whom the Chevalier d'Humières has promised when I want them."

"Fifty soldiers!"

"Yes; he is recruiting, and lends them to me. When the entertainment is over, if any are lost, I will replace them."

"Very well, my dear Rochefort. But that is not all."

"And what more do you want?" said Rochefort, smiling.

"M. de Beaufort—what have you done with him?"

"He is in the Vendômois, where he is waiting until I write for him to come up to Paris."

"Write to him, then—it is time."

"You are, therefore, sure of your blow?"

"Yes, but he must make haste: for hardly will the Parisians be in revolt, before we shall have ten princes instead of one, who will wish to put themselves at their head; and should he delay, he will find the place taken."

"May I make use of your name to him?"

"Certainly."

"May I tell him that he may rely upon you?"

"Most assuredly."

"And you will leave him all power?"

"As to the war, certainly; as to the politics—"

"You know that is not his forte."

"He will let me manage as I like about my cardinal's hat."

"And is your mind fixed on that?"

"As I am obliged to wear a hat, the shape of which does not suit me," said Gondy, "I wish that hat, at any rate, to be red."

"There is no disputing about tastes and colours," said Rochefort, laughing; "so I will answer for his consent."

"And you will write to him this evening?"

"I will do better than that—I will send a messenger to him."

"In how many days can he be here?"

"In five days."

"Let him come, and he will find a change here."

"I hope so."

"I do not doubt you. Therefore, go and collect your fifty men, and hold yourself in readiness.

"For what?"

"For everything."

"Is there any rallying sign?"

"A bunch of straw in the hat."

"That's right. Adieu, your excellence."

"Adieu, my dear Rochefort."

"Ah, Mazarin, Mazarin!" said Rochefort, as he dragged along his curé, who had not found an opportunity of slipping in a single word in the conversation—"you shall see whether I am too old for action!"

It was now half-past nine; and it required a good half hour for the coadjutor to go from the archiepiscopal palace to the tower of St. Jacques la Boucherie. As he approached it, the coadjutor observed that there was a light burning at one of the loftiest windows of the tower.

"Good!" said he; "our syndic is at his post."

He knocked, and some one opened the door. The vicar himself was waiting for him, and conducted him to the top of the tower with a light. When he had reached it, he pointed to a little door, set the candle in an angle of the wall, that the coadjutor might find it when he came out, and went down again.

Although the key was in the door, the coadjutor knocked.

"Come in!" said a voice, which the coadjutor recognised as that of the mendicant.

De Gondy entered. It was, in reality, the distributor of holy water of the porch of St. Eustache. He was waiting, reclined on a sort of truckle bed; but, on seeing the coadjutor enter, he rose up. It struck ten o'clock.

"Well," said Gondy, "have you kept your word to me?"

"Not altogether," replied the mendicant.

"How is that?"

"You asked me for five hundred men, did you not?"

"Yes—what then?"

"Well, I shall have two thousand for you."

"Are you not boasting?"

"Do you wish for proof of it?"

"Yes."

There were three candles burning, each before a window, of which one looked towards the city, the other towards the Palais Royal,

and the third towards the rue St. Denis. The man went silently to each of these candles, and extinguished them, one after the other.

The coadjutor found himself in darkness. The room was only illumined by the uncertain light of the moon, hidden behind large clouds, whose extremities it tipped with silver.

"What have you done?" demanded the coadjutor

"I have given the signal."

"What signal?"

"That of the barricades."

"Ah! ah!"

"When you leave this place, you will see my people at work. But take care that you do not break your legs in running against some chair, or by falling into a hole."

"Very well. Here is the sum, the same as you have already received. Now, remember that you are a leader, and do not go and drink."

"For twenty years, I have drank water only."

The man took the bag from the hands of the coadjutor, who heard the noise he made in fumbling and handling the pieces of gold.

"Aha!" said the coadjutor, "you are avaricious, you rogue."

The mendicant heaved a sigh, and threw the bag aside. "Shall I always be the same, then?" said he: "and shall I never be able to put off the old man? Gold!—misery, vanity."

"And yet you will take it," said the coadjutor.

"Yes; but in your presence I vow to employ what may be left of it in pious uses." His countenance was pale and contracted, like that of a man who had just experienced a strong internal struggle.

"Singular man!" muttered Gondy. And he took his hat to go away; but, on turning round, he saw that the mendicant had placed himself between him and the door. His first impression was, that the man had some evil intention against him. But very soon, on the contrary, he saw him clasp his hands, and fall on his knees.

"Your excellence," said he. "before you leave me, your blessing I beseech you!"

"Your excellence!" exclaimed Gondy. "My friend, you take me for some other person."

"No, your excellence, I only take you for what you are; that is to say, for the coadjutor. I knew you at the first glance."

Gondy smiled. "And you wish for my blessing?" said he.

"Yes; I have great need of it." The mendicant uttered these words in a tone of such deep humility and profound repentance, that Gondy stretched his hand over him, and gave him his blessing with all the unction of which he was capable.

"Now," said the coadjutor, "there is a bond of fellowship between us. I have blessed you, and you are consecrated to me, as I, on my part, am to you. Say, have you committed any great crime, which subjects you to human justice, and against which I can protect you?"

The mendicant shook his head. "The crime that I have committed, your excellence, has nothing to do with human justice; and you can only free me from it, by often blessing me, as you have just done."

"Be candid," said the coadjutor: "you have not all your life followed your present employment?"

"No, your excellence; I have only followed it ten years."

"And, before that, where were you?"

"In the Bastile."

"And before you were in the Bastile?"

"I will tell you, your excellence, on that day when you are willing to receive my confession."

"Very well. At whatever hour of the day or the night you present yourself before me, remember, that I am willing to give you absolution."

"Thanks, your excellence," said the mendicant in a hoarse voice; "but I am not yet ready to receive it."

"Very well. Adieu."

"Adieu, your excellence," said the mendicant, opening the door, and bending low before the prelate.

The coadjutor took the candle, descended the stairs, and went out absorbed in thought.

CHAPTER IV.

THE COMMOTION.

It was about eleven o'clock at night; and Gondy had not walked a hundred paces before he perceived a strange alteration taking place in the streets of Paris.

The whole city seemed to be inhabited by fantastic beings; silent shadows were seen, who were unpaving the streets; others were dragging and emptying the carts; and others were digging trenches, sufficient to engulph whole troops of horsemen. All these persons, who were so actively employed, were running backwards and forwards, like demons performing some unheard-of work. These were the beggars of the Court of Miracles—they were the agents of the giver of holy water of the porch of St. Eustache, who were preparing the barricades for the morrow.

Gondy looked at these men of darkness, these nocturnal workers, with a species of terror: he asked himself whether, after having caused all these foul and unclean creatures to leave their dens, he should have the power of making them return to them again. When any one of these beings approached him, he was inclined to make the sign of the cross.

He reached the rue St. Honoré, and went down it towards the rue de la Ferronniere. There the appearance was quite different: the merchants were running from shop to shop; the doors and shutters appeared to be shut, but they were only pushed to, so that they opened and shut immediately after giving entrance to men who appeared to be afraid to let any one see what they were carrying: these men were the shopkeepers, who, having arms, lent them to those who had none.

One individual was going from door to door, bending under the weight of swords, arquebuses, musketoons, and arms of every kind, which he laid down as they were wanted. By the light of a lantern, the coadjutor recognised Planchet.

The coadjutor reached the quay by the rue de la Monnaie. On

the quay, groups of citizens, in black or gray cloaks, (which denoted whether they belonged to the highest or lowest rank of their order,) were standing immoveable, whilst individuals were passing from one group to another. Each of these dark or gray cloaks was raised up behind by the point of a sword, and before by the barrel of an arquebus or a musketoon.

On reaching the Pont Neuf, the coadjutor found that bridge guarded. A man came up to him,

"Who are you?" demanded this man. "I do not know you as one of us."

"That is because you do not know your friends, my dear Louvières," said the coadjutor, raising his hat.

Louviéres recognised him, and bowed.

Gondy pursued his round, and went down even to the tower of Nesle. There he saw a long line of men, who were gliding along the walls, and who might have been taken for a procession of phantoms, for they were all enveloped in white cloaks. Having reached a certain spot, all these men appeared to vanish, one after the other, as if the earth had opened under their feet. Gondy ensconced himself in an angle, and saw them all disappear, from the first, even to the last but one. The last man raised his eyes, doubtless to make himself sure that he and his companions were not watched, and, in spite of the obscurity, he saw Gondy. He went straight up to him, and put a pistol to his throat.

"Halloo! M. de Rochefort," said Gondy, laughing, "let us not play with fire-arms."

Rochefort recognised the voice. "Ah, is it you, your excellence?" said he.

"My own self. But what people are you thus conducting into the bowels of the earth?"

"My fifty recruits from the Chevalier d'Humiéres, who are destined to enter into the light horse, and who have received, as part of their equipment, their white cloaks."

"And where are you going?"

"To a sculptor's, a friend of mine; only, we descend by the trap-door through which he carries in his marble."

"Very well," said Gondy; and he pressed the hand of Rochefort, who then went down in his turn, and closed the trap-door behind him.

The coadjutor returned home. It was one o'clock in the morning: he opened his window, and leant out to listen.

A strange, unheard-of, unknown sound pervaded the whole city. It was evident that some unusual and terrible thing was taking place in all the streets, which were as dark as Erebus. From time to time, a low rumbling noise was heard, like that of a gathering storm or a rising surge; but nothing clear, nothing distinct, nothing explicable, was offered to the mind; and any one would have said that these sounds were like the mysterious and subterranean noises that precede an earthquake.

The work of revolt continued throughout the whole night in the same manner. The next morning, Paris, on awakening, seemed to start at her own appearance. She might have been taken for a besieged city. Armed men were standing by the barricades with threatening eye, and musket on the shoulder. Watch-words, patrols, arrests, nay even executions—these were what the passengers met with at every step. Plumed hats and gilded swords were stopped, to make the wearers cry, "Down with Mazarin—long live Broussel!" and whoever refused to submit to this ceremony, was hooted, spit upon, and even beaten. They did not yet kill, but it was quite apparent that the inclination was not wanting.

The barricades had been pushed forward, even to the Palais Royal. From the rue des Bons-Enfans to that of la Ferronniere, from the rue St. Thomas du Louvre to the Pont-Neuf, from the rue Richelieu, to the gate of St. Honoré, there were more than ten thousand armed men, of whom the foremost uttered cries of defiance to the unmoved sentinels of the regiment of guards, who were placed as an advanced post all around the Palais Royal, of which the iron-grated gates were closed behind them—a precaution that made their situation very precarious. In the midst of all this, bands of men, from a hundred to a hundred and fifty in number, ghastly, livid, and ragged, went about, carrying standards, on which were

written—"*Behold the wretchedness of the people!*" Wherever these standard-bearers passed, frenzied cries were heard; and there were so many similar bands, that the cries were universal.

Great was the astonishment of Anne of Austria and Mazarin, when, on their awaking, it was declared that the city, which they had left in tranquillity the evening before, was now fevered, and in commotion. Neither of them was willing to believe the reports that reached them, and they declared that they would only trust to their own eyes and ears. A window was therefore opened: they saw, and heard, and were convinced.

Mazarin shrugged his shoulders, and pretended greatly to despise this populace; yet he turned pale, and ran to his cabinet in extreme agitation, shutting up his gold and jewels in his caskets, and putting his most valuable diamonds on his fingers. As for the queen, furious, and abandoning herself entirely to her arbitrary self-will, she sent for the Marshal de la Meilleraie, ordered him to take as many men as he chose, and to ascertain the meaning of this *plaisanterie*.

The marshal had generally a pretty good opinion of himself, and not the slightest fear, having that haughty contempt for the populace which all the gentlemen of the sword professed towards it. He therefore took a hundred and fifty men, and attempted to go out by the Pont du Louvre; but there he encountered Rochefort and his fifty light horsemen, accompanied by more than fifteen hundred persons. There was no possibility of forcing such a barrier; so the marshal did not attempt it, but went up the quay.

At the Pont Neuf, however, he found Louvières and his citizens. This time the marshal endeavoured to charge; but he was received with musket-shots, whilst stones fell like hail from all the windows. He there left three of his men.

Retreating towards the market-place, he there encountered Planchet and his halberts, and the halberts were lowered towards him in a menacing attitude. He wished to ride full speed over these gray cloaks; but the gray cloaks kept their ground, and the marshal fell back towards the rue St. Honoré, leaving on the field of battle four more of his guards, who had been quietly killed by the naked weapons.

Then he passed down the rue St. Honoré; but there he came upon the barricades of the mendicant of St. Eustache. They were guarded, not only by men, but by women and children. Master Friquet, the possessor of a pistol and sword that Louvières had given to him, had organized a band of young rascals like himself, and made noise enough to destroy everything.

The marshal, deeming this position the worst guarded of all, resolved to attack it. He caused twenty of his men to dismount, to force open the barricades, whilst he himself, and the rest of his troop, covered the assailants on horseback. The twenty men marched straight against the obstacle; but there, from behind beams, between the cart wheels, and from every elevated situation, a terrible firing commenced; and at the noise of this firing Planchet's halberdiers made their appearance at the corner of the cemetery of the Innocents, and the citizens of Louvières at the corner of the rue de la Monnaie.

The Marshal de la Meilleraie was caught between two fires. But, as he was a brave man, he determined to die where he was. He therefore returned shot for shot, and shrieks of pain began to be heard in the crowd. The guards, in better practice, shot more truly; but the citizens, being more numerous, overwhelmed them with a perfect tempest of fire. Men fell around him, as they might have done at Rocroy or Lerida. Fontrailles, his aide-de-camp, had his arm shattered; his horse received a ball in the neck, and he had great difficulty in managing him, for the pain made him nearly mad. In fine, they had reached that extreme point when the bravest feels a shudder in his veins, and the cold moisture on his brow, when suddenly the crowd opened in the direction of the rue de l'Arbre-sec, crying out, "Long live the coadjutor!" and Gondy, in rochet and purple hood, made his appearance, quietly passing along through the midst of the firing, and distributing his benedictions from right to left, with as much calmness as if he were leading the procession of the Fête-Dieu.

Every one fell on his knees.

The marshal recognised and hastened up to him.

"Extricate me from this place, for heaven's sake!" said he, "or I shall leave my skin here, and that of all my men."

There was such a tumult, that the rolling of heaven's own thunder could not have been heard. Gondy held up his hand, and demanded silence. And they were silent.

"My children," said he, "here is Marshal de la Meilleraie, whose intentions you have misunderstood, and who undertakes, on entering the Louvre, to ask the queen, in your name, to liberate our Broussel. Do you undertake this, marshal?" added Gondy, turning towards la Meilleraie.

"*Morbleu!*" cried he, "I believe so, indeed. I undertake it. I did not expect to get off so cheaply."

"He gives you his word as a gentleman," said Gondy.

The marshal raised his hand in token of assent.

"Long live the coadjutor!" shouted the crowd. Some voices even added, "Long live the marshal!" but all resumed in chorus, "Down with Mazarin!"

The crowd gave way; the road of the rue St. Honoré was the shortest. The barricades were opened, and the marshal, with the remains of his troop, made their retreat, preceded by Friquet and his banditti, some pretending to beat the drum, others imitating the sound of trumpets. It was almost a triumphal march; only, the barricades were again closed behind the guards. The marshal bit his nails.

All this time, as we have said, Mazarin was in his cabinet, putting his little affairs into order. He had sent for d'Artagnan, but, in the midst of all this tumult, he despaired of finding him. D'Artagnan was not on duty. In ten minutes, however, he appeared at the door, followed by the inseparable Porthos.

"Ah! come, come, M. d'Artagnan," exclaimed the cardinal, "and welcome, as well as your friend. But what is going on in this cursed Paris?"

"What is going on, your excellence? Nothing good," replied d'Artagnan, shaking his head. "The city is in open revolt; and, just now, as I was crossing the rue Montorgueil, with M. du Vallon—whom you see here, and who is your devoted servant—in spite of my uniform, and perhaps even on account of my uniform, they wanted us to cry out, 'Long live Broussel!' And may I

tell your excellence what else they also wanted to make us cry out?"

"Tell it—tell it."

"'Down with Mazarin!' Faith, the word has slipped out

Mazarin smiled, but turned very pale. "And you did cry out, did you not?" said he.

"Faith, no," said d'Artagnan; "I was not in voice; and as M. du Vallon has got a cold, he did not cry either. Then, your excellence—"

"Then what?" said Mazarin.

"Look at my hat and cloak." And d'Artagnan pointed out four shot-holes in his cloak, and two in his hat. As for Porthos's dress, a blow from a halbert had torn it in the side, and a pistol shot had broken his plume.

"*Diavolo!*" said the cardinal, very much dejected, and looking at the two friends with an air of simple admiration: "as for me, I should have cried out."

At this moment the sound of the tumult approached nearer. Mazarin looked around him, and wiped his brow. He much wished to go to the window, but dared not.

"Look and see what is going on, M. d'Artagnan," said he.

D'Artagnan went to the window with his habitual unconcern. "Ah!" said he, "what is this? Marshal de la Meilleraie returning without his hat—Fontrailles carrying his arm in a sling—guards wounded, horses covered with blood—Eh! but what are the sentinels doing? They are presenting—they are going to fire."

"Orders have been given," said Mazarin, "to fire on the people should they come near the Palais Royal."

"But if they fire, all is lost!" said d'Artagnan.

"We have the iron-barred gates."

"The gates! In five minutes these iron gates will be torn up, twisted, battered down. Do not fire, for God's sake!" cried d'Artagnan, opening the window.

In spite of this exhortation, which, in the midst of the tumult, could not have been heard, three or four musket-shots were fired;

then a terrible volley succeeded; the balls were heard to rattle against the front of the Palais Royal; and one of them, passing under d'Artagnan's arm, broke a glass, in which Porthos was admiring himself with great satisfaction.

"Oh, dear me!" cried the cardinal—"a Venetian glass!"

"Oh! your excellence," said d'Artagnan, closing the window with great tranquillity, "do not weep yet: it is not worth while; for it is probable that, in an hour hence, there will not remain one of all these glasses in the palace, whether they are Venetian or Parisian."

"What is your advice, then?" said the cardinal, trembling all over.

"Why, zounds, to give Broussel up to them, since they want him! What the deuce can you do with a parliamentary counsellor? He is of no use."

"And you, M. du Vallon, is that your opinion? What would you do?"

"I would give up Broussel," answered Porthos.

"Well, well, gentlemen," said Mazarin, "I will talk to the queen about it."

At the end of the corridor he stopped. "I can depend upon you—can I not, gentlemen?" said he.

"We do not give ourselves twice," said d'Artagnan: "we gave ourselves to you; command, therefore, and we will obey."

"Very well, then," said Mazarin, "enter that closet, and wait." And making a circuit, he passed into the saloon by another door.

CHAPTER V.

THE COMMOTION BECOMES AN INSURRECTION.

The closet into which d'Artagnan and Porthos had entered, was only separated by a kind of tapestry door from the saloon in which the queen was. The slightness of the partition, therefore, enabled

them to hear all that passed, whilst the opening between the two curtains, though narrow, allowed them also to see.

The queen, pale with anger, was standing in this saloon; and yet her self-command was so great, that it might have been supposed she was altogether unmoved. Behind her were Comminges, Villequier, and Guitaut; and behind these men were the ladies.

Before her, the chancellor Seguier (the same personage who, twenty years before, had persecuted her so much) was relating that his carriage had just been broken to pieces, that he himself had been pursued, that he had thrown himself into the hotel d'O, and that the hotel had been immediately carried by storm, pillaged, and devastated: fortunately he had time to gain a closet, concealed in the tapestry, in which an old woman had shut him up, with his brother, the bishop of Meaux. There the danger had been so imminent, the rioters having approached this closet with such violent threats, that the chancellor had thought his last hour was come, and, to be prepared for the death which must follow his discovery, had confessed to his brother. Fortunately, however, his fears were not realized: the people, supposing he had escaped by some back door, had retired, and enabled him to retreat in safety. Then, disguising himself in some of the Marquis d'O's clothes, he left the hotel, stepping over the body of his own exempt, who, along with two guards, had been killed in defending the door.

Mazarin, who entered during this recital, quietly glided up to the queen, and listened.

"Well," demanded the queen, when the chancellor had finished, "and what do you think of all this?"

"I think that it is a very serious affair, madame."

"But what advice do you offer me?"

"I could offer your majesty one piece of advice, but I dare not."

"Oh, dare! dare, sir!" said the queen, with a bitter smile: "you were daring enough in another affair."

The chancellor coloured, and stammered out some words.

"It is not with the past that we have now to do, but with the present," said the queen. "You said that you could give me some advice: what is it?"

"Madame," said the chancellor, with great hesitation, "it is, to release Broussel."

The queen, although very pale, became visibly more so, and her countenance contracted.

"Release Broussel!" said she: "never!"

At this moment steps were heard in the antechamber, and, without being announced, the Marshal de la Meilleraie appeared at the door.

"Ah, here you are, marshal!" joyfully exclaimed Anne of Austria: "you have brought all this rabble to their senses, I hope?"

"Madame," said the marshal, "I have left three of my men on the Pont-Neuf, four in the market-place, six at the corner of the rue de l'Arbre-Sec, and two at the gate of your palace—in all, fifteen—and I bring back ten or a dozen wounded men. My hat is gone, I know not where, being carried off by a ball; and in all probability I should have shared the same fat as my hat, had it not been for the coadjutor, who came and rescued me."

"Ah!" said the queen, "I should have been indeed astonished not to find that little bandy-legged terrier dog mixed up with all this."

"Madame," said la Meilleraie, laughing, "do not speak too ill of him before me, for the service he has rendered me is yet too recent."

"That is all very well," continued the queen: "be as grateful as you please; that is no concern of mine. Here you are, safe and sound, and that is all I require. Be not only welcome, then, but *well come back.*"

"Yes, madame, but I am well come back only upon one condition; which is, that I should convey to you the will of the people."

"The will!" said Anne of Austria, frowning. "In sooth, M. le Marshal, you must have found yourself in great danger indeed, to undertake this strange embassy."

These words were pronounced in a tone so ironical, that it could not escape the marshal's observation.

'Pardon me, madame," said he: "I am no advocate. I am a soldier, and therefore I am probably ignorant of the true meaning of words: I should have said the *desire*, and not the *will*, of the people.

As for the remark you did me the honour to make, I believe that you wish to intimate that I was afraid."

The queen smiled.

"Very well. Yes, madame, I was afraid. It is the third time in my life that this has occurred to me; and yet I have been in twelve general actions, and I know not how many combats and skirmishes. Yes, I was afraid; and I prefer even facing your majesty, however menacing may be your smile, to being opposed to those demons of hell, who accompanied me here, and who come from I know not where!"

"Bravo!" said d'Artagnan to Porthos, in a low voice: "well answered."

"Very well!" said the queen, biting her lips, whilst the courtiers looked at each other with astonishment: "what is this desire of my people?"

"That Broussel be given up to them, madame," replied the marshal.

"Never!" exclaimed the queen—"never!"

"Your majesty is the mistress," said la Meilleraie, bowing, and making one step back.

"Where are you going, marshal?" demanded the queen.

"To deliver your majesty's reply to those who are waiting for it."

"Remain here, marshal. I do not wish to appear to be treating with rebels."

"Madame, I have pledged my word," said the marshal.

"Which implies—"

"That unless you order me to be arrested, I am compelled to return to them."

"The eyes of Anne of Austria glanced with rage. "Oh, sir," said she, "do not calculate on that! I have arrested greater men than yourself. Guitaut!"

Mazarin rushed forward. "Madame," said he, "if, in my turn, I dared to offer you some advice—"

"Would it also be to release Broussel, sir? In that case, you may spare yourself the trouble."

'No," said Mazarin; "although perhaps that is as good as any other."

"What may it be, then?"

"To send for the coadjutor."

"The coadjutor!" exclaimed the queen: "that hideous shuffler! It is he who has excited all this disturbance."

"The more cogent reason why you should send for him," replied Mazarin. "If he has excited it, he can calm it."

"And observe, madame," said Comminges, who stood near a window, through which he was looking—"observe, there is now a good opportunity; for see, he is giving his blessing on the place of the Palais Royal."

The queen rushed towards the window. "It is true," she cried. "The consummate hypocrite! Look at him."

"I can perceive," said Mazarin, "that every one is kneeling before him, although he is only the coadjutor; whilst, if I were in his place, they would tear me to pieces, although I am a cardinal. Therefore, madame, I persist in my *desire* (Mazarin dwelt upon this word) that your majesty would receive the coadjutor."

"Why do not you also say, *your will?*" demanded the queen, in a low voice.

Mazarin bowed.

The queen seemed for an instant absorbed in thought. Then raising her head—"M. le Marshal," said she, "go for the coadjutor, and bring him to me."

"And what shall I say to the people?" demanded the marshal.

"That they must have patience," replied the queen: "I am sure that I have enough."

There was such a tone of command in the voice of the proud and haughty Spaniard, that the marshal made no further observation, but bowed, and left the room.

D'Artagnan turned towards Porthos. "How will this end?" said he.

"We shall soon see," answered Porthos, in his tranquil manner.

In the meantime Anne of Austria went up to Comminges, and spoke to him in a low voice. Mazarin, very uneasy, looked in the

direction of d'Artagnan and Porthos. The other attendants conversed in a low tone.

The door opened again, and the marshal appeared, followed by the coadjutor.

"Here, madame, is M. de Gondy," said he, "who hastens to obey your majesty's orders."

The queen advanced four steps towards him, and then stopped short, cold, severe, and motionless, with her under lip disdainfully thrust forward.

Gondy bowed respectfully.

"Well, sir," said the queen, "what do you say to this commotion?"

"That it is no longer a commotion, madame, but a revolt."

"The revolt rests at the door of those who think that my people have the power to revolt," exclaimed the queen, incapable of dissimulating, before the coadjutor, that she considered him, and justly perhaps, as the promoter of this disturbance. "A revolt! See what those call it, who favour the commotion that they have themselves excited. But wait now, wait: the king's authority will soon settle all this."

"And is it to tell me this, madame," coldly replied Gondy, "that your majesty has done me the honour of admitting me to your presence?"

"No, my dear coadjutor," said Mazarin; "it is to ask your advice under the distressing circumstances in which we are placed.'

"And is it true," demanded Gondy, feigning great astonishment, "that her majesty has sent for me to give her my advice?"

"Yes," said the queen; "they wished me to do so.'

The coadjutor bowed.

"Her majesty then desires—"

"That you would inform her how you would act in her situation," hastily answered Mazarin.

The coadjutor looked at the queen, who gave an affirmative nod. "In her majesty's place," coolly replied Gondy, "I should not hesitate—I should give up Broussel."

"And if I should not give him up," exclaimed the queen, "what do you think will happen?"

"I think, that, to-morrow, not one stone will be left upon another in all Paris," said the marshal.

"I do not ask you," said the queen drily, and without even turning her head: "I addressed M. de Gondy."

"If her majesty interrogates me," said the coadjutor, with the same tranquillity, "I tell her that my opinion exactly agrees with that of the marshal."

The colour mounted into the queen's face; her beautiful blue eyes appeared as if they were going to start out of her head; her vermilion lips, compared by all the poets, to the blossom of the pomegranate, turned pale, and trembled with rage; she almost frightened even Mazarin himself, accustomed as he was to the domestic storms of this turbulent household.

"Give up Broussel!" she at length exclaimed, with a fearful smile: "excellent advice, by my faith! It is evident enough that it comes from a priest!"

Gondy remained firm. The insults of the day appeared to recoil from him, like the sarcasms of the evening before. But bitter hatred and revenge were silently gathering, drop by drop, at the bottom of his heart. He looked coldly at the queen, who was urging Mazarin to say something in his turn.

Mazarin, as usual, thought a good deal, and spoke but little. "Ah!" said he, "it is good and friendly advice. I also would give up this worthy M. Broussel, dead or alive, and all will then be over."

"If you gave him up dead, all would be over, as your excellence says, but in a different way to what you expect."

"Did I say dead or alive?" replied Mazarin: "a mere figure of speech. You know that I speak French badly, whilst you speak and write it so well, M. le Coadjutor."

"This is a fine cabinet council," said d'Artagnan to Porthos: "we held much better at la Rochelle, with Athos and Aramis."

"At the bastion of St. Gervais," said Porthos.

"There, and elsewhere."

The coadjutor suffered the explanation to pass, and replied, with the same imperturbability—"Madame, if my advice be not to your majesty's taste, it is doubtless because you have much better to follow. I am too well aware of the queen's wisdom, and of that of her counsellors, to suppose that the capital will be long left in such a state of tumult, as may produce a revolution."

"Therefore it is your opinion," said the queen, with a sneer, and biting her lips with rage, "that the commotion of yesterday, which is to-day a revolt, may to-morrow become a revolution."

"Yes, madame," gravely replied the coadjutor.

"Why, to hear you, sir, the people must have got beyond all restraint?"

"This is a bad year for kings," said Gondy, shaking his head: "look at England, madame."

"Yes; but, fortunately, we have no Oliver Cromwell in France," said the queen.

"Who knows?" replied Gondy. "Such men are like the thunder —they are only seen when they strike."

Every one shuddered, and there was a momentary silence, during which the queen pressed her hands against her bosom, evidently to repress the violent beatings of her heart.

"Porthos," said d'Artagnan, "look at that priest."

"I see him," said Porthos: "what then?"

"Well, he is a man!"

Porthos looked at his friend with astonishment: it was evident that he did not clearly understand what he meant.

"Your majesty," continued the merciless coadjutor, "is therefore about to pursue the measures that seem to you most expedient; but I can foresee that they are fearful, and of a nature to increase the irritation of the rebels."

"Well, then, M. le Coadjutor, you, who have such vast influence over them, and who are our friend," said the queen, ironically—"you will calm them by giving them your benedictions."

"Perhaps it will be too late, said Gondy, still immoveable—"perhaps I shall have lost all my influence over them; whilst, by giving up Broussel, your majesty will sever the roots of the sedition, and

will acquire the right of severely chastising any fresh access of revolt."

"Have I not then this right?" exclaimed the queen.

"If you have, use it," replied Gondy.

"Zounds!" said d'Artagnan to Porthos—"there is a character I like. Why is he not minister, and why am I not his d'Artagnan, instead of belonging to that scoundrel Mazarin! Ah, by Jove! the fine strokes we would make together!"

"Yes," said Porthos.

The queen, by a sign, dismissed the court, except Mazarin. Gondy bowed, and was retiring with the others.

"Remain, sir," said the queen.

"Good," thought Gondy to himself: "she is going to yield."

"She is going to kill him," said d'Artagnan to Porthos; "but at all events not by my aid. On the contrary, I swear to God that if any one attacks him, I will fall upon the assailants."

"And I also," said Porthos.

"Good," muttered Mazarin, seating himself, "now we shall see something fresh."

The queen looked after those who were leaving the room, and when the last had departed, she turned round. It was evident that she made incredible efforts to subdue her anger: she fanned herself, smelt her various perfumes, and walked up and down. Mazarin remained seated, apparently, reflecting. Gondy, who began to be somewhat uneasy, examined all the tapestry with his looks, touched the cuirass that he wore under his long robe, and, from time to time, felt under his purple hood or scarf, to be certain that the handle of a Spanish dagger, which he had concealed there, was ready for his grasp.

"Now let us see," said the queen, at length stopping short—"let us see, now that we are alone: repeat your advice, M. le Coadjutor."

"It is this, madame: to pretend that you have reflected, to confess publicly that you have made a mistake—which indeed constitutes the power of strong governments—to release Broussel from prison, and to restore him to the people."

"Oh!" exclaimed Anne of Austria, "thus to humble myself! Am I, or am I not, queen? All this rabble, that howls thus, is it, or is it not, the majority of my subjects?—Have I any friends, any guards? Ah, by our lady! as said the Queen Catherine," she continued, warming at her own words, "rather than give them up this infamous Broussel, I would strangle him with mine own hands!"

And, with her hands clenched, she rushed towards Gondy, whom she at that moment detested quite as much as Broussel.

Gondy remained perfectly unmoved; not a muscle of his countenance changed; but his icy look crossed the queen's furious glance like a cimiter.

"There is a dead man, if there is yet a Vitry at court, and he should enter at this moment," said the Gascon. "But as for me, before he reaches the good prelate, I shall kill Vitry; and it is quite certain that the cardinal would be infinitely obliged to me for it."

"Hush," said Porthos, "listen then."

"Madame," cried the cardinal, seizing hold of Anne of Austria, and drawing her back—"madame, what are you doing?" Then he added, in Spanish,—"Anne, are you mad? You are here wrangling like a citizen's wife—you, a queen! Do you not see that you have before you, in the person of this priest, all the people of Paris, whom it is dangerous to insult at this moment; and that, if this priest wills it, in one hour you will no longer have a crown? Come, then, by and by, on another occasion, you may be firm and resolute; but this is not the time. Now you must flatter and caress, or you are only a woman of vulgar mind."

At the first words of this speech, d'Artagnan had seized Porthos's arm, and had continued gradually squeezing it. Then, when Mazarin had finished—"Porthos," said he, in a very low voice, "never let Mazarin know that I understand Spanish, or I am a lost man, and you also."

"Good," answered Porthos.

This rough admonition, delivered with a species of eloquence characteristic of Mazarin when he spoke Spanish or Italian, but which he entirely lost when speaking French, was pronounced with an unmoved countenance, which did not permit Gondy to suspect,

skilful physiognomist as he was, that it was anything but a simple recommendation to be more moderate.

On her part, also, the excited queen suddenly calmed herself. The fire passed from her eyes, the blood from her cheeks, and the wordy anger from her lips. She seated herself, her arms fell powerless by her sides, and, in a voice stifled by her tears—

"Pardon me, M. le Coadjutor," she said, "and attribute this violence to what I suffer. A woman, and therefore subject to the weakness of my sex, I am frightened at the bare idea of a civil war—a queen, and accustomed to obedience, I am roused by the first appearance of opposition."

"Madame," said Gondy, bowing, "your majesty deceives yourself when you term my sincere advice, opposition to your will. Your majesty has none but the most submissive and respectful subjects. It is not the queen that the people blame: they demand Broussel—that is all; and will be only too happy to live under your majesty's laws; provided, however, that your majesty gives them up Broussel!" added Gondy, smiling.

Mazarin, who had pricked up his ears at the words, "*it is not the queen that the people blame,*" and imagined that the coadjutor was going to speak of the cries of "down with Mazarin!" was grateful to Gondy for this suppression, and now said, in his softest voice, and with his most gracious smile—

"Madame, trust the coadjutor, who is one of our most skilful politicians. The first cardinal's hat that may be vacant, seems fitted for that noble head."

"Ah! what need you have of me, you cunning rascal!" thought Gondy.

"And what will he promise us," said d'Artagnan, "on the day they shall want to kill him? Zounds! if he gives away hats in this manner, let us prepare ourselves, Porthos, and each of us ask for a regiment to-morrow. Faith, if the civil war lasts but a year, I will get a constable's staff gilded for myself."

"And for me?" asked Porthos.

"You! I will give you the baton of Marshal de la Meilleraie, who appears to me not to be in great favour at this present moment."

"So, sir," said the queen, "you have serious fears of the consequences of this popular excitement?"

"Serious, madame!" replied Gondy, astonished at finding himself no further advanced: "I fear, when the torrent has broken its banks, lest it should cause great ravages."

"And I," said the queen—"I think that in this case it is necessary to interpose fresh embankments. Go! I will consider of it."

Gondy looked at Mazarin in utter astonishment. Mazarin was approaching the queen to speak to her; and at the same moment a frightful tumult was heard in the place of the Palais Royal. Gondy smiled, the queen's countenance became inflamed, and Mazarin turned pale.

"What is the matter now?" said he.

Comminges rushed into the room. "Pardon me, madame," said Comminges to the queen, as he entered: "the people have dashed the sentinels to pieces against the iron rails, and are at this moment forcing the gates. What orders do you give?"

"Listen, madame!" said Gondy.

The roaring of the waves, the crash of thunder, the groanings of a volcano in eruption, cannot be compared to the storm of shouts that ascended to the heavens at that moment.

"What, do I command?" said the queen.

"Yes, madame, for there is no time to lose.

"How many men have you in the Palais Royal?"

"Six hundred."

"Place one hundred round the king, and, with the remainder, sweep me away this populace."

"Madame," said Mazarin, "what are you doing?"

"Go!" said the queen.

Comminges left the room, with the passive obedience of the soldier.

At this moment a horrible crash was heard: one of the gates began to give way.

"Ah, madame!" said Mazarin, "we are all lost!—the king, me, and yourself!"

Anne of Austria, at this exclamation, which came from the heart

of the terrified cardinal, began to be frightened herself. She recalled Comminges.

"It is too late!" said Mazarin, tearing his hair—"it is too late!"

The gate gave way, and they heard the triumphant howlings of the populace. D'Artagnan put his hand to his sword, and made a sign to Porthos to do the same.

"Save the queen!" cried Mazarin, addressing the coadjutor.

Gondy rushed towards the window, which he opened: he recognised Louvières, at the head of from three to four thousand men.

"Not one step farther!" he cried: "the queen is signing."

"What are you saying?" exclaimed the queen.

"The truth, madame," said Mazarin, putting paper and a pen before her: "it is absolutely necessary." Then he added—"Sign, Anne, I beseech you! I will have it so!"

The queen fell upon a chair, took the pen, and signed.

Restrained by Louvières, the people had not advanced one step farther; but that terrible murmur, indicative of popular rage, still continued.

The queen wrote:—"The gaoler of the prison of St. Germain will liberate the counsellor Broussel." And she signed it.

The coadjutor, who devoured her slightest motion with his eyes, seized the paper as soon as it was signed, returned to the window, and waving it with his hand, "Here is the order!" said he.

All Paris seemed to utter one vast shout of joy; then the cries, "Long live Broussel!" "Long live the coadjutor!" resounded.

"Long live the queen!" said the coadjutor.

Some voices responded to his, but they were very faint and rare. Perhaps the coadjutor himself uttered this cry only to make the queen more fully sensible of her weakness.

"And, now that you have got what you wanted," said she, "go, M. Gondy!"

"When the queen again requires me," said the coadjutor, bowing, "her majesty knows that I am at her command."

The queen bowed, and Gondy retired.

"Ah! accursed priest!" exclaimed Anne of Austria, stretching out her hand towards the scarcely closed door, "I will one day

make you drink the dregs of that gall you have poured out for me to-day."

Mazarin wished to approach her.

"Leave me!" cried she: "you are not a man!" And she left the room.

"It is you who are not a woman," muttered Mazarin.

Then, after a moment's reflection, he remembered that d'Artagnan and Porthos were in the closet, and must, consequently, have heard and seen everything. He frowned, and went straight up to the tapestry, which he lifted. The closet was empty.

At the last word that the queen uttered, d'Artagnan had taken Porthos by the hand, and had dragged him into the gallery. Thither Mazarin now followed them, and found the two friends walking up and down.

"Why did you leave the closet, M. d'Artagnan?" said Mazarin.

"Because," answered d'Artagnan, "the queen commanded every one to leave the room; and I thought that the command applied to us, as well as to the others."

"Therefore you have been here since?"

"Since about a quarter of an hour," said d'Artagnan, looking at Porthos, and making him a sign not to contradict him.

Mazarin perceived the sign, and was convinced that d'Artagnan had seen and heard everything; yet he was obliged to him for the falsehood. "Positively, M. d'Artagnan," said he, "you are exactly the man I wanted, and you may rely upon me, as well as your friend."

Then, bowing to the two friends with his most charming smile, he returned to his cabinet, much more tranquil; for, upon the appearance of Gondy, the tumult had ceased, as if by enchantment.

CHAPTER VI.

MISFORTUNE REVIVES THE MEMORY

Anne had returned to her oratory, actually furious.

"What!" she exclaimed, wringing her beautiful hands—"what! the people saw M. de Condé, the first prince of the blood, arrested by my mother-in-law, Marie de Medicis—they saw my mother-in-law herself, the former regent, driven away by the cardinal—they saw M. de Vendôme, that is to say, the son of Henry IV., a prisoner at Vincennes—and they said nothing whilst these great persons were insulted, imprisoned, and menaced! Yet for a Broussel!—oh, my God! what then has become of royalty?"

Anne, without knowing it, touched the very plague-spot. The people had said nothing for the princes; but they rose for Broussel, because the question concerned a plebeian, and, by defending Broussel, they instinctively felt that they were defending themselves.

In the meantime, Mazarin was walking up and down his cabinet, looking from time to time at his beautiful Venetian glass, all starred and shattered.

"Ah!" said he, "it is very melancholy, I know it well enough, to be forced to yield in this manner. But, bah! we shall have our revenge. Of what consequence is Broussel? It is a name, and not a principle."

Skilful politician as he was, Mazarin was this time mistaken. Broussel was a principle, and not a name.

Therefore, when Broussel re-entered Paris on the following day, in a large carriage, having his son Louvières by his side, and Friquet behind the carriage, all the people rushed armed to meet him. The cries of "Long live Broussel!" "Long live our father!" resounded from every quarter, and were revolting to Mazarin's ears. The spies of the cardinal and the queen brought vexatious intelligence from all quarters, and found the cardinal much agitated, and the queen very calm. The queen appeared to be maturing some great resolution, which redoubled Mazarin's anxiety. He

well knew the pride, and much dreaded the resolves, of Anne of Austria.

The coadjutor had entered the parliament more truly king than the king, the queen, and Mazarin united. By his advice an edict was passed, inviting the people to lay aside their arms, and to demolish the barricades. It was now well enough known, that only one hour was necessary to resume their arms, and one night to restore the barricades.

Planchet had returned to his shop. The victory produced a complete amnesty. Planchet had therefore no longer any fears of hanging; and, moreover, he was convinced, that, if they only threatened to arrest him, the people would rise in his favour, as they had done for Broussel.

Rochefort had restored his light horsemen to the Chevalier d Humières: two of the number did not answer to the muster-call; but the chevalier, who was at heart a frondeur, would not hear of any indemnity.

The mendicant had resumed his place in the porch of St. Eustache, distributing, as usual, his holy water with one hand, and asking alms with the other; and no one suspected that those two hands had just been aiding in pulling from the social edifice the foundation-stone of royalty.

Louvières was proud and contented. He had avenged himself on Mazarin, whom he detested, and had greatly contributed to the liberation of his father. His name had been mentioned with terror at the Palais Royal; and he laughingly said to the counsellor, now restored to his family, "Do you believe, father, that if I were now to ask the queen for a company, she would give it me?"

D'Artagnan had taken advantage of the tranquillity to despatch Raoul, whom he had had great difficulty in keeping quiet during the disturbance, and who absolutely insisted upon drawing his sword, for one party or the other. Raoul had at first resisted; but when d'Artagnan spoke in the count's name, Raoul paid Madame de Chevreuse a visit, and then departed for the army.

Rochefort alone considered the affair badly finished. He had

written to the Duke of Beaufort, who was momentarily expected, and would find Paris in a state of tranquillity. He therefore went to the coadjutor, to ask him whether it would not now be better to send to the prince, to advise him not to come; but Goudy said, after reflecting an instant, "Let him continue his journey."

"But is it not finished, then?" demanded Rochefort.

"Why, my dear count, we are yet only at the commencement."

"What makes you think so?"

"The knowledge I have of the queen's heart: she will not remain beaten."

"Is she preparing anything?"

"I hope so."

"What do you know? Let me hear?"

"I know that she has written to M. le Prince, requesting him to return from the army as speedily as possible."

"Ah!" said Rochefort, "you are right: we must let M. de Beaufort come up."

The very evening of this conversation, it was reported that the prince had arrived. This was very simple and natural intelligence, and yet it caused an immense sensation. It was said that indiscretions had been committed by Madame de Longueville, who had made confidential communications to the prince, her brother. These communications discovered sinister projects on the part of the queen.

The same evening that the prince arrived, the most influential citizens, the magistrates, and the captains of the quarters, visited their acquaintances, saying—"Why should we not take the king, and place him in the Hotel de Ville? We are wrong to allow him to be educated by our enemies, who give him bad counsel; when, if he were directed by the coadjutor, for example, he would imbibe national principles, and would love his people."

There was a secret agitation during the night, and on the next day the gray and black cloaks, the patroles of armed shopkeepers, and the bands of mendicants, re-appeared.

The queen had passed the night in a strictly private conference with the prince, who had been introduced into her oratory at midnight, and did not quit it till five o'clock.

At that hour the queen went to the cardinal's cabinet. As she had not gone to bed, so the cardinal was already up. He was writing an answer to Cromwell: six days had already slipped away of the ten which he had requested Mordaunt to wait.

"Bah!" said he, "I shall have made him wait a little; but M. Cromwell knows too much about revolutions not to excuse me."

He was therefore reading with satisfaction the first paragraph of his reply, when he was interrupted by a gentle knocking at the door which communicated with the queen's apartments. Anne of Austria could alone come by that door; therefore the cardinal arose and opened it.

The queen was in deshabille, but the deshabille was not unbecoming; for, like Diana of Poictiers, and Ninon de l'Enclos, Anne of Austria preserved the privilege of being always beautiful. This morning, however, she was more beautiful than usual; for her eyes had all that brilliancy that follows from internal satisfaction.

"What is the matter, madame?" said Mazarin, somewhat anxiously: "you have a very proud look."

"Yes, Giulio," said she, "proud and happy; for I have found a method of stifling this hydra."

"You are a great politician, my queen," said Mazarin; "let us hear this method." And he concealed what he had written, by slipping the letter under some blank paper.

"They wish to take the king from me," said the queen.

"Alas, yes! and to hang me."

"They shall not have the king.,'

"And they shall not hang me, *Benone*."

"Listen. I wish to carry away my son, and myself, and you with us. I wish that this event, which to-day or to-morrow will change the aspect of affairs, should be accomplished without any one knowing it, except you, myself, and a third person."

"And who is that third person?"

"The prince."

"Is he then arrived, as I have been told?"

"Yes, yesterday evening."

"And have you seen him?"

"I have but just quitted him."

"And does he agree to this project?"

"The advice is his own."

"And Paris?"

"He will starve it, and compel it to surrender at discretion."

"The project is not deficient in grandeur, and I can only perceive one objection."

"And what is that?"

"Its impossibility."

"A word entirely void of meaning. Nothing is impossible!"

"In design."

"In execution! Have we any money?"

"A little," said Mazarin, fearing least Anne of Austria should want to dip deeply into his purse."

"Have we any troops?"

"Five or six thousand men."

"Have we any courage?"

"Abundance."

"Then the thing is done. Oh! can you conceive, Giulio?—Paris—this odious Paris—awaking some morning without queen, without king; invested, besieged, famished; having for all and only resource, its stupid parliament, and its meagre, bandy-legged coadjutor."

"Delightful! delightful!" said Mazarin; "I can conceive the effect; but do not clearly perceive the means of accomplishing it."

"I will find them."

"You understand that it is war—civil war—furious, aggravated, and implacable?"

"Oh, yes, yes, war!" said Anne of Austria; "yes, I wish to reduce this rebellious city to ashes—I wish to quench the fire in blood—I wish that a fearful example should immortalise the crime by the punishment. Paris! I hate and detest it!"

"All very fine, Anne. So, you are sanguinary! But take care: we are not in the times of the Malatesta, or of the Castruccio Castracani. You will get your head cut off, my fair queen, and that would be a pity."

"You are laughing."

"I laugh but very little. A war against an entire people is a dangerous thing. Look at your brother, Charles I. He is in a bad state—a very bad state."

"We are in France, and I am a Spaniard."

"So much the worse, *per Bacco!* so much the worse. I should much prefer your being a Frenchwoman, and myself a Frenchman: they would hate us both much less."

"And yet you approve of the plan?"

"Yes, if I saw that it was practicable."

"It is so, I tell you; therefore prepare for your departure."

"Me! I am always ready to go; only, you know well enough, I shall never go—and this time, probably, no more than the others."

"But, after all, if I go, will you not go also?"

"I will make the attempt."

"You make me die with impatience, with all your fears, Giulio; and of what, after all, are you afraid?"

"Of very many things."

"What are they?"

Mazarin's countenance, from sarcastic, became serious. "Anne," said he, "you are only a woman; and, as a woman, you may insult men as you please, being sure of impunity. You accuse me of fear: I have not so much as you have, since I do not run away. Against whom are they crying out? Is it against you or against me? Whom do they wish to hang? Is it you or me? Well, then, I make head against the storm—I, whom you accuse of fear; but not like a braggadocio—that is not my way: I keep firm. Imitate me, then: not so much show, and more reality. You call out loud enough, but it ends in nothing. You talk of flying!"

Mazarin shrugged his shoulders, took the queen's hand, and led her to the window. "Look there!"

"Well, and what then!" said the queen, blinded by her obstinacy.

"Well, what do you see from that window? If I am not mistaken, the citizens, with cuirasses and helmets, and armed with good muskets, as in the times of the league, and who are looking so

earnestly at this window, that you will be seen if you lift the curtains so high. Now, come to the other window. And what do you see there? People armed with halberts, who guard your gates. At every outlet from this palace, to which I could lead you, you would find the same thing. Your gates are guarded; even the air-holes of your cellars are guarded; and I might say to you, as the good la Ramée said of M. de Beaufort—unless you become a bird or a mouse, you will not get out."

"And yet he got out."

"And do you reckon on getting out in the same manner."

"I am therefore a prisoner?"

"By Jove!" said Mazarin, "I have been proving it to you for this hour past." And Mazarin quietly resumed his despatch.

Anne, trembling with anger, and colouring from humiliation, left the cabinet, closing the door violently behind her. Mazarin did not turn his head.

Having reached her apartments, the queen threw herself into a chair, and began to weep. Then in an instant, as if struck by a sudden idea—"I am saved!" she cried, springing up. "Yes, yes! I know a man who will find means to withdraw me from Paris—a man whom I have too long forgotten." Then she added, in a thoughtful tone, yet with a feeling of joy—"Ungrateful that I am! for twenty years have I forgotten this man, whom I ought to have made a marshal of France. My mother-in-law lavished gold, titles, and caresses on Concini, who destroyed her; the king made Vitry a Marshal of France, for an assassination; and I—I have left in oblivion and misery, that noble d'Artagnan, who saved me!"

And she hastened to a table, on which were paper and ink, and began to write.

CHAPTER VII.

THE INTERVIEW

This morning d'Artagnan was sleeping in Porthos's chamber. It was a custom that the two friends had adopted, since the disturbances. Their swords were under their bolsters, and their pistols were on a table, within reach of their hands.

D'Artagnan was dreaming that the sky was covered by a large yellow cloud, that a shower of gold was falling from this cloud, and that he was holding his hat under a rain-spout. Porthos, on his part, was dreaming that the panels of his carriage were not large enough for the arms which he was getting painted on them.

They were awoke at seven o'clock by a valet out of livery, who brought a letter for d'Artagnan.

"From whom?" inquired d'Artagnan.

"From the queen," answered the valet.

"Hem!" said Porthos, raising himself up in his bed, "what does he say?"

D'Artagnan requested the valet to go into an adjoining room, and when he had closed the door he jumped out of bed, and read rapidly, whilst Porthos kept looking at him with all his eyes, not daring to question him.

"Friend Porthos," said d'Artagnan, holding out the letter to him, "here, at last, is your title of baron, and my brevet of captain. There—read, and judge for yourself."

Porthos stretched out his hand, took the letter, and read these words in a trembling voice:—

"The queen wishes to speak with M. d'Artagnan. Let him follow the bearer."

"Well!" said Porthos, "I see nothing but what is ordinary in that."

"As for me, I see much that is extraordinary in it," said d'Artagnan. "If they send for me, it is because things are in great perplexity! Only think a little what a vast disturbance there must be

in the queen's mind, to cause her to think of me, after an interval of twenty years."

"That is true," said Porthos.

"Sharpen thy sword, baron, charge thy pistols, and give some corn to thy horses. I answer for it that you will hear some news before to-morrow; and *motus!*"

"Ah! but is it not a snare that they are laying to get rid of us?" said Porthos, always thinking of the annoyance that his future grandeur would cause to some other person.

"If it be a trap," replied d'Artagnan, "make yourself easy: I shall smell it out. If Mazarin is an Italian, I am a Gascon." And d'Artagnan dressed himself in an incredibly short time.

Whilst Porthos, still in bed, was clasping his cloak for him, there was another knock at the door.

"Come in," said d'Artagnan.

A second valet entered.

"From his eminence, Cardinal Mazarin," said he.

D'Artagnan looked at Porthos.

"Ah! here is a mighty confusion," said Porthos: "how will you begin?"

"This falls out admirably well," replied d'Artagnan: "his eminence makes an appointment with me for half an hour hence."

"Good."

"My friend," said d'Artagnan, turning towards the valet, "tell his eminence, that in half an hour I shall be at his service."

The valet bowed, and left the room.

"It is very fortunate that he did not see the other," said d'Artagnan.

"Do you think then they do not both send for you for the same purpose?"

"I do not think so; I am certain of it."

"Come, come, d'Artagnan, quick! Remember that the queen is waiting for you; after the queen, the cardinal; and, after the cardinal, I am waiting."

D'Artagnan called the queen's valet. "Here I am, my friend," said he; "conduct me to her majesty."

The valet conducted him by the rue des Petits-champs, and turning to the left, made him enter by a little door of the garden, which opened from the rue Richelieu. Then they gained a private staircase, and d'Artagnan was introduced into the oratory.

A certain emotion, for which he could not account, made the lieutenant's heart beat. He had no longer the confidence of youth, and experience had taught him all the gravity of the events that had happened. He well knew what the dignity of princes, and the majesty of kings really were; he had accustomed himself to class his own mediocrity after the splendours of fortune and birth. Formerly, he would have approached Anne of Austria, as a young man addresses a woman. Now, it was quite another thing: he came to her as a humble soldier to an illustrious chieftain.

A slight noise broke the silence of the oratory. D'Artagnan started, and saw a white hand lifting up the tapestry, and, by its shape, whiteness, and beauty, he recognised that royal hand which had one day been given him to kiss. The queen entered.

"It is you, M. d'Artagnan," said she, fixing on the officer a look full of melancholy affection: "it is you—I remember you well. Look at me," she continued: "I am the queen. Do you remember me?"

"No, madame," replied d'Artagnan.

"But do you no longer know," continued Anne of Austria, in that fascinating tone, that, when she chose, she could impart to her voice, "that the queen formerly wanted a young cavalier, brave and devoted—that she found this cavalier—and, although he might imagine she had forgotten him, that she has kept a place for him at the bottom of her heart."

"No, madame, I do not know that," replied the musketeer.

"So much the worse, sir;" continued Anne of Austria, "so much the worse, at least for the queen—for the queen has now need of the same courage, and of the same devotion."

"What!" said d'Artagnan, "the queen, surrounded as she is by such devoted followers, such wise counsellors—men, in fine, so great by their merit or by their position—does her majesty deign to cast her eyes on an obscure soldier!"

Anne understood this concealed reproach: she was more touched than irritated by it. So much self-denial and disinterestedness, on the part of the Gascon gentleman, had often humbled her: she had permitted herself to be vanquished in generosity.

"All that you say to me about those who surround me, M. d'Artagnan, is perhaps true," said the queen; "but I have confidence in you alone. I know that you are devoted to the cardinal: be so to me, also; and I take charge of your fortune. Come, would you do for me now, what that young gentleman, whom you do not know, did formerly for the queen?"

"I will do everything that your majesty may command," said d'Artagnan.

The queen reflected a moment, and seeing the guarded manner of the musketeer—"Perhaps you love repose?" said she.

"I do not know, for I have never enjoyed it, madame."

"Have you any friends?"

"I had three. Two have left Paris, and I know not where they are gone. One only remains: it is one of those who knew, I believe, the cavalier of whom your majesty has done me the honour to speak."

"Very well," said the queen; "you and your friend are worth an army."

"And what am I to do, madame?"

"Return at five o'clock, and I will tell you. But do not speak to a living soul, sir, of the appointment I have made with you."

"No, madame."

"Swear it, by your Saviour!"

"Madame, I have never broken my word. When I say no, it is no."

The queen, though astonished at this language, to which her courtiers had not accustomed her, drew from it a happy omen of the zeal that d'Artagnan would display in her service, for the accomplishment of her project. It was one of the Gascon's artifices, sometimes to conceal his profound subtilty under the appearance of a rough sincerity.

"The queen has no further commands at present?" said he.

"No, sir," replied Anne of Austria, "and you may retire until the time I have mentioned."

D'Artagnan bowed and left the room. "The deuce!" said he, when he was at the door: "it seems that they want me here."

Then, as the half hour had elapsed, he crossed the gallery, and knocked at the cardinal's door. Bernouin ushered him in.

"I am come at your command, your excellence," said he. And, according to his usual habit, he cast a rapid glance all round, and perceived that Mazarin had a sealed letter before him. It was, however, laid on the desk on the written side, so that it was impossible to see to whom it was directed.

"You are come from the queen?" said Mazarin, looking earnestly at d'Artagnan.

"I, your excellence? Who told you that?"

"No one; but I know it."

"I am extremely sorry to tell your excellence that you are mistaken," replied the Gascon, with the greatest impudence, and strong in the promise that he had just made Anne of Austria.

"I opened the door of the antechamber myself, and saw you coming from the end of the gallery."

"It is because I was brought up by the private staircase."

"And why was that?"

"I do not know; it must have been by some mistake."

Mazarin knew that it was not easy to make d'Artagnan tell what he wished to conceal: he therefore gave up, for the moment, the attempt to discover the secret that the Gascon kept from him.

"Let us speak of my business," said the cardinal, "since you do not like to tell me anything of your own."

D'Artagnan bowed.

"Are you fond of travelling?" demanded the cardinal.

"I have passed my life on the high roads."

"Will anything retain you in Paris?"

"Nothing would keep me here, except a superior order."

"Very well; here is a letter, which you must deliver according to its address."

"To its address, your excellence? But there is none."

In fact, the side opposite the seal was without any writing whatever.

"That is to say," replied Mazarin, "there is a double envelope."

"I understand; and I must tear open the first, when I have reached a given place."

"Exactly so. Take it, and depart. You have a friend, M. du Vallon, whom I greatly esteem: you will take him with you."

"The deuce!" said d'Artagnan to himself; "he knows that we heard his conversation yesterday, and wishes to remove us from Paris."

"Do you hesitate?" demanded Mazarin.

"No, your excellence, and I will depart immediately. But I should wish one thing—"

"And what is that? Tell me."

"It is that your excellence would go to the queen."

"When?"

"Immediately."

"And why?"

"Only to say these words to her—'I am sending M. d'Artagnan somewhere, and I have ordered him to set off instantly.'"

"It is now evident enough," said Mazarin, "that you have seen the queen."

"I have had the honour to inform your eminence, that there had possibly been a mistake."

"What does that mean?" demanded Mazarin.

"May I venture to renew my request to your excellence?"

"Very well, I will go there. Wait for me here."

Mazarin looked carefully around, to see if any key had been left in one of the desks, and then left the room.

Ten minutes elapsed, during which d'Artagnan made every effort to read, through the first envelope, what was written on the second, but he could not accomplish it.

Mazarin returned, pale, and in deep thought, and sat down at his desk. D'Artagnan examined him, as he had done the letter; but the envelope of his countenance was almost as impenetrable as that of the epistle.

"Ah!" thought the Gascon, "he looks annoyed. Can it be against me? He reflects: is it about sending me to the Bastile? Very fine, your excellence! But the first word you say, I will strangle you, and turn frondeur. I shall be carried in triumph, like M. Broussel; and Athos will proclaim me the French Brutus. That would be very droll!"

The Gascon, with his ever-galloping imagination, had already settled everything he should do, according to circumstances.

But Mazarin gave no order of this kind. On the contrary, he began to give d'Artagnan the velvet paw

"You were right, my dear M. d'Artagnan," said he to him; "you cannot leave Paris yet."

"Ah!" said d'Artagnan.

"Return me, therefore, the despatch, I pray."

D'Artagnan obeyed. Mazarin made himself sure that the seal was intact.

"I shall want you this evening," said he; "return at five o'clock."

"At five o'clock, your excellence, I have an appointment, that I must keep," said d'Artagnan.

"Do not let that distress you," said Mazarin: "it is the same."

"Good!" thought d'Artagnan: "I suspected it."

"Return, then, at five o'clock, and bring that dear M. du Vallon with you. But leave him in the antechamber: I wish to talk to you alone."

D'Artagnan bowed; and whilst bowing, he said to himself—"Both the same order, both at the same hour, both at the Palais Royal. I have it. Ah! there is a secret, for which M. de Gondy would have paid a hundred thousand livres!"

"You reflect?" said Mazarin, rather anxiously.

"Yes; I was asking myself whether we should come armed or not."

"Armed to the teeth," said Mazarin.

"Very well, your excellence," said d'Artagnan, "it shall be so."

D'Artagnan bowed, left the room, and hastened to repeat Mazarin's flattering promises to his friend, which put Porthos into inconceivably high spirits.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FLIGHT.

In spite of the agitated state of the city, the Palais Royal presented one of the most brilliant spectacles, when, at five o'clock, d'Artagnan repaired thither. And it was not surprising. The queen had given up Broussel and Blancmesnil to the people: the queen had therefore nothing more to fear, as the people had nothing more to demand. The present disturbance was, therefore, merely a remnant of their agitation, which only required time to calm itself; as, after a storm, it often requires many days to settle down the swell of the waves.

There had been a great banquet, for which the return of the conqueror of Lens was the pretext. The princes and princesses were invited, and their carriages had blocked up the courts since mid-day. After the dinner, there was to be play in the queen's apartments.

Anne of Austria was that day charming, alike from her grace and talent. Never had she been seen in a gayer humour. Vengeance, in full blossom, shone in her eyes, and expanded her lips.

The moment they rose from table, Mazarin disappeared. D'Artagnan, already at his post, was waiting in the ante-room. The cardinal appeared with a smiling countenance, took him by the hand, and led him into his cabinet.

"My dear M. d'Artagnan," said the minister, seating himself, "I am going to give you the greatest mark of confidence that a minister can give an officer."

D'Artagnan bowed.

"I hope," said he, "that your excellence gives it me without any reserve whatever, and with that perfect confidence I deserve."

"You deserve it more than any one, my dear friend; therefore it is to you that I apply."

"Very well," said d'Artagnan; "and I will confess to your excellence, that I have been long looking forward to such an oppor-

tunity as this. Therefore, tell me quickly what you have to impart to me."

"You will this evening, my dear M. d'Artagnan, have the safety of the state in your hands," replied Mazarin. There he paused

"Explain yourself, your excellence. I am all attention."

"The queen has determined to take a short journey this evening, to St. Germain, with the king."

"Ah!" said d'Artagnan, "that is to say, the queen wishes to leave Paris."

"You understand—a woman's caprice.

"Yes, I understand very well," said d'Artagnan.

"It was on that account she sent for you this morning, and told you to return this evening."

"And a mighty matter it was, to want me to swear that I would mention this appointment to no one!" muttered d'Artagnan. "Ah, women! Although they are queens, they are ever women!"

"Would you disapprove of this little journey, my dear M. d'Artagnan?" demanded Mazarin, with some anxiety.

"I, your excellence?" said d'Artagnan; "and why should I?"

"Because you shrug your shoulders"

"It is a habit I have of talking to myself, your excellence."

"Therefore, you approve of this journey?"

"I neither approve nor disapprove, your excellence: I merely await your orders."

"Very well. It is, therefore, upon you that I have fixed to transport the king and queen to St. Germain."

"Deceitful knave!" said d'Artagnan to himself.

"You perceive, therefore," continued Mazarin, seeing d'Artagnan's impassibility, "that, as I told you, the safety of the state will be entrusted to you."

"Yes, you excellence; and I feel all the responsibility of such a charge."

"You undertake it, however?"

"I always undertake."

"You think the thing possible?"

"Everything is possible."

"Shall you be attacked on the road?"

"Very probably."

"What will you do in that case?"

"I will pass through those who attack me."

"And should you not pass through them?"

"Then so much the worse for them—I will pass over them."

"And you will take the king and queen safe to St. Germain?"

"Yes,"

"Upon your life?"

"Upon my life."

"You are a hero, my dear sir!" said Mazarin, looking at the musketeer with admiration.

D'Artagnan smiled.

"And I myself?" said Mazarin, after a moment's silence, and looking earnestly at d'Artagnan.

"How! and you, your excellence?"

"And I myself, should I wish to leave Paris?"

"That would be more difficult. Your excellence might be recognised."

"Even under this disguise?" said Mazarin. And he raised a cloak that covered a chair, on which was a complete cavalier's suit, of gray pearl and garnet, with a profusion of silver lace.

"If your excellence is disguised, it will certainly make it much easier."

"Ah!" said Mazarin, breathing again.

"But it will be necessary to do what your excellence said, the other day, you would have done in our place."

"And what will it be necessary to do?"

"To cry, 'Down with Mazarin!'"

"I will cry."

"In French, in good French, your excellence: be careful of the accent. Six thousand Angevins were killed in Sicily because they pronounced Italian badly. Take care that the French do not avenge themselves on you for the Sicilian vespers!"

"I will do my best."

"There are many armed men in the streets," continued d'Artagnan: "are you quite sure that no one has been made acquainted with the queen's project?"

Mazarin reflected.

"It would be a fine thing for a traitor, your excellence, this affair you propose to me. The danger of an attack would be an ample excuse."

Mazarin shuddered; but he reflected that a man who intended to betray him, would not warn him of it. Therefore, he said, with some vivacity, "I do not trust every one; and the proof is, that I have chosen you to escort me."

"Then do you not go with the queen?"

"No," said Mazarin.

"Oh! you go after the queen?"

"No," again said Mazarin.

"Ah!" said d'Artagnan, who began to comprehend.

"Yes, I have my own plans," continued Mazarin. "With the queen, I should double the chances against her; after the queen, her departure would double mine; then, the court once safe, they might be apt to forget me. Great people are ungrateful."

"That is true," said d'Artagnan, casting an involuntary glance at the queen's diamond, which Mazarin had on his finger.

Mazarin followed the direction of his eyes, and gently turned the stone of his ring inwards.

"I wish, therefore," said Mazarin, with his acute smile, "to prevent their being ungrateful to me."

"That is Christian charity," said d'Artagnan, "not to lead your neighbour into temptation."

"It is precisely on that account," said Mazarin, "that I wish to depart before them."

D'Artagnan smiled: he was exactly the man to understand this Italian craftiness.

Mazarin saw him smile, and took advantage of the moment. "You will, therefore, begin by taking me from Paris first—will you not, my dear M. d'Artagnan?"

"A rough commission, your excellence," said d'Artagnan, resuming his grave air.

"But," said Mazarin, looking very earnestly at him, that no one expression of his countenance might escape him—"but you did not make all these observations about the king and the queen."

"The king and the queen are my king and queen, your excellence," replied the musketeer: "my life is theirs—I owe it to them—they demand it of me, and I have nothing to say."

"It is true," muttered Mazarin, in a low voice; "therefore, as your life does not belong to me, I must purchase you—must I not?" And sighing deeply, he again turned the stone of his ring out.

D'Artagnan smiled. These two men touched each other in one point, and that is, cunning. Had they sympathized in the same manner as to courage, the one would have made the other perform great actions.

"But," said Mazarin, 'you understand, that, if I demand this service of you, it is with the intention of being grateful for it."

"Has your excellence yet only reached the intention?" said d'Artagnan.

"Here," said Mazarin, drawing the ring from his finger, "here, my dear M. d'Artagnan, is a diamond that formerly belonged to you: it is just that it should return to you. Take it, I entreat you."

D'Artagnan did not give Mazarin the trouble of pressing him. He took the ring, looked to see if it was really the same stone, and, having satisfied himself that the water was pure, he put it on his finger with indescribable satisfaction.

"I much valued it," said Mazarin, giving it a last lingering look; "but never mind, I give it you with great pleasure."

"And I, your excellence," replied d'Artagnan, "receive it in the same spirit with which it is given. Come, let us talk over our little affairs. You wish to depart before the others?"

"Yes, I greatly desire it."

"At what hour?"

"At ten o'clock."

"And at what hour does the queen depart?"

"At midnight."

"Then it is possible. I can get you out of Paris, leave you beyond the barrier, and then return for her."

"Admirably arranged. But how will you get me out of Paris?"

"Oh, as to that, you must let me follow my own plans."

"I give you full powers: take as large an escort as you like."

D'Artagnan shook his head.

"It appears to me, however, to be the safest way," said Mazarin.

"Yes, for you, your excellence, but not for the queen."

Mazarin bit his lips. "Then what must we do?"

"You must leave it to me, your excellence."

"Hum!" said Mazarin.

"It is absolutely necessary to give me the entire direction of this affair."

"Nevertheless—"

"Or you must find some other person," said d'Artagnan, turning his back.

"Ah!" said Mazarin, in a low voice, "I verily believe he will go off with the diamond." And he called him back. "M. d'Artagnan! my dear M. d'Artagnan!" said he, in his most caressing voice.

"Your excellence?"

"Do you answer for everything?"

"I answer for nothing—I will do my best."

"Your best?"

"Yes."

"Well then! I depend upon you."

"It is very fortunate that you do," said d'Artagnan to himself.

"You will be here, then, at half-past nine?"

"Shall I find your eminence ready?"

"Certainly; quite ready."

"It is, therefore, all settled. Now, your excellence, will you let me see the queen?"

"For what purpose?"

"I should wish to take her majesty's orders from her own mouth.

"She directed me to give them to you."

'She may have forgotten something."

"And are you very desirous of seeing her?"

"It is indispensable, your excellence."

Mazarin hesitated a moment; d'Artagnan remained immoveable in his determination.

"Come, then," said Mazarin, "I will conduct you to her; but not one word of our conversation."

"What we have said only concerns ourselves, your excellence," replied d'Artagnan.

"And do you swear that you will be dumb?"

"I never swear, your excellence. I say yes, or no; and, as I am a gentleman, I keep my word."

"Well, I perceive that I must confide in you, without any restriction."

"It is much the best plan, believe me, your excellence."

"Come," said Mazarin.

The cardinal made d'Artagnan go into the oratory, and told him to wait there. He did not wait long. In five minutes the queen entered, in grand costume. Thus adorned, she looked scarcely thirty-five years old, and was very beautiful

"Is it you, M. d'Artagnan?" said she, smiling graciously; "I thank you for having insisted on seeing me."

"I crave your majesty's pardon," said d'Artagnan; "but I wished to receive your orders from your own mouth."

"You know what is in agitation?"

"Yes, madame."

"You accept, therefore, the commission I entrust to you?"

"With gratitude."

"Very well—be here at midnight."

"I will be here."

"M. d'Artagnan," said the queen, "I know your disinterestedness too well to talk to you of my gratitude at this moment; but I swear that I will not forget this second service, as I have forgotten the first."

"Your majesty is at liberty either to remember or to forget;

further I do not know to what you refer." And d'Artagnan bowed.

"Go, sir," said the queen, with her most charming smile—"go, and return at midnight."

She waved her hand as a token of adieu, and d'Artagnan departed; but, in retiring, he cast his eyes at the door through which the queen had entered, and, at the bottom of the tapestry, he saw the end of a velvet slipper.

"Good," said he: "Mazarin was listening to hear whether I betrayed him. Really that Italian puppet does not deserve the services of a man of honour."

D'Artagnan was not, however, the less punctual to his appointment. At half-past nine he entered the antechamber. Bernouin was in attendance, and introduced him. He found the cardinal dressed as a cavalier. He looked exceedingly well in this costume, which he wore, as we have before said, with great elegance; only he was now rather pale, and trembled a little.

"Are you quite alone?" said Mazarin.

"Yes, your excellence."

"And that excellent M. du Vallon? Shall we not have the pleasure of his company?"

"Yes, your excellence; he is waiting in his carriage."

"Where is it?"

"At the garden door of the Palais Royal."

"It is therefore in his carriage that we are going?"

"Yes, your excellence."

"And without any other escort than you two?"

"Is not that enough? One of us would be quite sufficient."

"Really, my dear M. d'Artagnan," said Mazarin, "you quite frighten me with your coolness."

"I should have thought, on the contrary, that it would inspire confidence."

"Must I not take Bernouin with me?"

"There is no room for him: he will follow, your eminence."

"Well, then," said Mazarin, "I must implicitly follow your directions in everything."

"Your excellence, there is still time to draw back," said d'Artagnan; "and your eminence is perfectly at liberty."

"No, no," said Mazarin, "let us go."

And they went down the private staircase, Mazarin leaning on d'Artagnan. The musketeer felt the cardinal's arm trembling on his own. They crossed the courts of the Palais Royal, where some carriages, belonging to late guests, still remained; they entered the garden, and reached the little door. Mazarin took the key from his pocket, and attempted to open the door, but his hand trembled so much that he could not find the keyhole.

"Give it to me," said d'Artagnan.

Mazarin gave him the key. D'Artagnan opened the door, and put the key into his pocket, reckoning upon returning the same way.

The steps of the carriage were down, the door open, and Mousqueton standing by it. Porthos was at the back part of the vehicle.

"Step in, your excellence," said d'Artagnan.

Mazarin did not wait to be told twice, but jumped into the carriage.

D'Artagnan entered after him. Mousqueton shut the door, and then hoisted himself up behind the carriage with many a groan. He had made some objection to coming, under pretence of his wound, which still gave him great pain; but d'Artagnan had said to him—

"Remain, if you prefer it, my dear M. Mouston; but I warn you that Paris will be burnt to-night."

On which Mousqueton made no further demur, but declared, that he was quite ready to follow his master and M. d'Artagnan to the end of the world.

The carriage set off at a gentle trot, such as did not in the least denote that it contained people who were at all in a hurry. The cardinal wiped his forehead with his handkerchief, and looked around him. He had Porthos on his left, and d'Artagnan on his right. Each guarded a door—each served him as a rampart.

Opposite, on the cushion in front, were two pairs of pistols—one pair before Porthos, another before d'Artagnan. The two friends had likewise their swords by their sides.

At a hundred paces from the Palais Royal, a patrol stopped the carriage. "Who goes there?" demanded the leader.

"Mazarin!" replied d'Artagnan, bursting out laughing.

The cardinal felt his hair bristling up on his head.

The joke appeared excellent to the citizens, who, seeing a carriage without arms on the panels, and without an escort, never could have believed the reality of such an act of imprudence.

"A good journey!" cried they: and they let them pass on.

"Hem!" said d'Artagnan: "what does your excellence think of that answer?"

"A man of talent!" exclaimed Mazarin.

"In fact," said Porthos, "I understand—"

About the middle of the rue des Petits-champs, another patrol stopped the carriage. "Who goes there?" said the leader.

"Fall back, your excellence," said d'Artagnan.

And Mazarin buried himself so completely between the two friends, that he was entirely concealed by them.

"Who goes there?" repeated the same voice, with considerable impatience.

D'Artagnan perceived that some people threw themselves before the horses; he therefore thrust his body half out of the carriage.

"Ha! Planchet," cried he.

The leader approached: it was really Planchet. D'Artagnan had recognised the voice of his ancient lacquey.

"How, sir!" said Planchet, "is it you?"

"Oh, my God, yes, my good friend. Our dear Porthos has just received a sword wound, and I am taking him to his country house at St. Cloud."

"Really!" said Planchet.

"Porthos," continued d'Artagnan, "if you can yet speak, my dear Porthos, say one word to our good friend Planchet."

"Planchet, my friend," said Porthos in a doleful voice, "I am very ill, and, should you meet with a physician, you will do me a great kindness by sending him to me."

"Ah, great God," said Planchet, "what a misfortune! And how did this happen?"

"I will tell you all about it," said Mousqueton.

Porthos emitted a deep groan.

"Clear the way for us, Planchet," said d'Artagnan in a low voice, "or he will not reach home alive. The lungs are injured, my friend."

Planchet shook his head, as if to say, "in that case, it is a bad business." Then turning towards his men, "Let them pass," said he, "they are friends."

The carriage resumed its progress, and Mazarin, who had held his breath, ventured to respire again.

"*Bricconi!*" muttered he.

A few paces before they reached the gate of St. Honoré, they met a third troop: this was composed of very ill-looking people, who rather resembled banditti than anything else: they were the men belonging to the mendicant of St. Eustache.

"Attention, Porthos!" said d'Artagnan.

Porthos extended his hand towards his pistols.

"What is the matter?" said Mazarin.

"Your excellence, I believe that we are in bad company."

A man come up to the door, holding a kind of scythe in his hand. "Who goes there?" said this man.

"Ah, rascal!" answered d'Artagnan, "do you not know the prince's carriage."

"Prince or not," said the man, "open the door. We are guarding this gate, and no one shall pass through whom we do not now."

"What must we do?" said Porthos.

"Pass, to be sure!" replied d'Artagnan.

"But how can we pass?" inquired Mazarin.

"Through them, or over them! Gallop on, coachman!'

The coachman raised his whip.

"Not one step farther," cried the man who appeared the leader, "or I cut the throats of your horses."

"Confound it!" said Porthos, "that would be a pity: the beasts cost me a hundred pistoles each."

"I will pay you two hundred for them," said Mazarin.

"Yes, but when their throats are cut, they will cut ours."

"There is one coming up on my side," said Porthos: "shall I kill him?"

"Yes, with a blow of your fist, if you can: do not fire, except at the last extremity."

"I can do that," said Porthos.

"Come and open the door," said d'Artagnan to the man with the scythe, taking one of his pistols by the barrel, and preparing to strike with the butt.

This man approached. As he came up, d'Artagnan, to be more free in his movements, got half out of the door: his eyes were fixed on the face of the mendicant, which was illumined by the light of a lantern. The mendicant evidently recognised the musketeer, for he turned very pale; and d'Artagnan certainly recognised him, for his hair bristled up on his head.

"M. d'Artagnan!" he exclaimed, starting back: "M. d'Artagnan! Let them pass."

Perhaps d'Artagnan would also have spoken; but at this moment a blow was heard, like that of a hammer falling upon the head of an ox: it was Porthos, who had just knocked down his man. D'Artagnan turned, and saw the unhappy wretch, lying four yards off.

"Now, full speed!" he cried to the coachman: "quick, quick!"

The coachman gave the horses a tremendous cut with his whip; the noble animals bounded forward; cries, like those of men knocked down, were heard; then they felt a double jerk: both wheels had just passed over a round and flexible body. There was now a moment's silence: the carriage passed through the gate.

"To the Cours-la-Reine!" cried d'Artagnan to the coachman. Then turning towards Mazarin: "Now, your excellence," said he, "you may say five *paters* and five *aves*, to thank God for your deliverance. You are saved! you are free!"

Mazarin only answered by a sort of groan: he could hardly credit such a miracle.

Five minutes after, the carriage stopped: it had reached the Cours-la-Reine.

"Is your excellence satisfied with your escort?" demanded the musketeer.

"Enchanted, sir," replied Mazarin, venturing to look out of one of the windows. "Now do the same for the queen."

"That will be less difficult," said d'Artagnan, leaping out of the carriage. "M. du Vallon, I recommend his eminence to your care."

"Make yourself perfectly easy about that," said Porthos, stretching out his hand.

D'Artagnan took hold of it and shook it.

"Ah—oh!" cried Porthos.

D'Artagnan looked at his friend with astonishment. "What is the matter with you?" said he.

"I believe that I have sprained my hand," said Porthos.

"Why the plague do you hit so unmercifully hard, then?"

"I was obliged: my man was just going to fire a pistol at me. But how did you get rid of yours?"

"Oh, mine," said d'Artagnan, "was not a man."

"What was he, then?"

"A spectre."

"And—"

"I conjured him away."

Without further explanation, d'Artagnan took his pistols, put them into his girdle, wrapped himself in his cloak, and, not wishing to return by the same barrier, he proceeded towards the Richelieu gate.

CHAPTER IX.

THE COADJUTOR'S CARRIAGE.

Instead of returning by the gate of St. Honoré, d'Artagnan, who had plenty of time before him, made a circuit, and entered by that of Richelieu. He was here examined; and when, by his

plumed hat and gold-laced cloak, they had ascertained that he was an officer of musketeers, they surrounded him, with the intention of making him call out "Down with Mazarin!" The first demonstration rather disquieted him; but when he found what they required, he repeated the cry in such melodious tones, that even the most fastidious were satisfied.

He then proceeded down the rue Richelieu, meditating on the method by which he should carry off the queen; for to get her out in a carriage bearing the arms of France, was not to be thought of. At the door of Madame de Guémenée's hotel, he saw an equipage. A sudden idea illumined his mind.

"Ah, by Jove!" said he, "that would be a good stratagem of war." And he went up to the carriage, and examined the arms on its panels, and the livery of the coachman on the box. This examination was the more easy, as the coachman was sleeping like a top.

"It is actually the coadjutor's carriage," said he: "upon my word, I begin to think that Providence favours us."

He quietly seated himself in the carriage, and, pulling the silken cord that was attached to the coachman's finger—"To the Palais Royal," said he.

The coachman suddenly awakened, and immediately proceeded in the direction ordered, never doubting but that the order came from his master. The Swiss was just closing the gates, but seeing such a splendid equipage, he concluded but that it was an important visitor, and allowed the carriage to pass. It stopped under the colonnade.

The coachman now first perceived that the lacqueys were not behind the carriage. Imagining that the coadjutor had otherwise employed them, he leaped from his box, and, still holding the reins, came and opened the door.

D'Artagnan jumped out of the carriage, and, at the very moment that the coachman, terrified at perceiving a stranger, started back, he seized him by the collar with his left hand, and presented a pistol to his head with the right.

"Attempt to utter one word," said d'Artagnan, "and you are a dead man."

The expression of d'Artagnan's countenance satisfied the coachman that he had fallen into some ambush, and he stood with gaping mouth and staring eyes.

Two musketeers were walking in the courtyard.

"M. de Bellière," said d'Artagnan to one of them, "be so kind as to take the reins from this fine fellow; then get upon the box, drive the carriage to the door of the private staircase, and wait for me there. It is on an affair of the utmost importance, and is on the king's service."

The musketeer, who knew that his officer was incapable of any foolish pleasantry in affairs of duty, obeyed, without saying a word although he thought the order a singular one.

Then, turning towards the second musketeer,

"M du Verger," said d'Artagnan, "assist me in conducting this man to a place of security."

The musketeer, who thought that his officer had just arrested some prince in disguise, bowed, and drawing his sword, made a sign that he was ready.

D'Artagnan mounted the stairs, followed by, his prisoner, who was himself followed by the musketeer. They crossed the vestibule, and entered Mazarin's antechamber. Bernouin was there, anxiously waiting for some intelligence concerning his master.

"Well sir," said he.

"Everything goes on admirably well. my dear M. Bernouin; but here is a man whom we must put into a place of security."

"Where must that be, sir?"

"Where you please, provided the place you choose has a shutter fastened by a padlock, and a door which locks."

"We have got that," said Bernouin.

And they took the poor coachman into a closet with grated windows, which much resembled a prison.

"Now, my good friend," said d'Artagnan, "I must request you instantly to disencumber yourself of your hat and cloak in my favour."

The coachman, as may be supposed, made no resistance. Besides, he was so astounded at what had happened, that he actually tottered

and stammered like a drunken man. D'Artagnan put every thing under the arm of the valet-de-chambre.

"Now, M. du Verger," said he, "shut yourself up with this man till M. Bernouin comes to open the door for you. The duty will be a pretty long one, and not very amusing: I am aware of that; but you understand," he added with great seriousness—"the king's service."

"At your command, lieutenant," replied the musketeer, who saw that important matters were at stake.

"*Apropos*," said d'Artagnan: "should this man attempt to escape, or to call out, pass your sword through his body."

The musketeer made a sign with his head, which meant to say, that he would punctually obey the order.

D'Artagnan left the room, taking Bernouin with him. It then struck twelve.

"Lead me into the queen's oratory," said he: "inform her majesty that I am here, and then take that bundle, with a musketoon well loaded, and put them on the box of the carriage that is waiting at the door of the private staircase.

Bernouin ushered him into the oratory, where he sat down, in a very thoughtful mood.

Everything had gone on as usual at the Palais Royal. At ten o'clock, as we have before said, almost all the guests had retired. Those who were to fly with the court, had received their instructions, and each was requested to be at the Cours-la-Reine between midnight and one in the morning.

At ten o'clock, Anne of Austria went to the king's apartments. They had just put Monsieur to bed; and the young Louis, having remained up the last, was amusing himself by placing leaden soldiers in order of battle, an exercise in which he greatly delighted. Two pages of honour were playing with him.

"Laporte," said the queen, "it must be time to put his majesty to bed."

The king begged to remain up longer, not being at all sleepy, as he said; but the queen insisted, saying,

"Are you not going to bathe at Conflans to-morrow morning, at

six o'clock, Louis? You requested to do so yourself, if I am not mistaken."

"You are right, madame," said the king, "and I am ready to go to my chamber, if you will kiss me. Laporte, give the candle to the Chevalier de Coislin."

The queen pressed her lips on the bright and polished forehead which the august boy held towards her, with a gravity that already savoured of etiquette.

"Go quickly to sleep, Louis," said the queen, "for you will be awoke early."

"I will do my best to obey you, madame," said the young Louis, "but I am not at all sleepy."

"Laporte," said Anne of Austria, "look for a very dull book to read to his majesty; but do not undress yourself."

The king left the room, accompanied by the Chevalier de Coislin, who carried the candle. The other page of honour went home.

Then the queen went to her own apartment. Her ladies—that is to say, Madame de Brégy, Mademoiselle de Beaumont, Madame de Motteville, and Socratine, her sister, whom they thus designated on account of her learning—had just brought her, with her wardrobe, the remains of her dinner, on which she supped, according to custom.

The queen then gave her orders as usual; talked of a banquet, that the Marquis de Villequier had offered to give her on the day after the morrow; fixed upon the persons to whom she would allow the honour of being there; announced, for the next day, a visit to Val-de-Grace, where she intended to pay her devotions; and gave her orders to Beringhen, her principal valet-de-chambre, to accompany her there.

Having finished supper, the queen, pretending to be greatly fatigued, retired to her bedchamber. Madame de Motteville, who was in close attendance that evening, followed her, to assist her in undressing. The queen went to bed, spoke kindly to her for some minutes, and then dismissed her.

It was at this moment that d'Artagnan entered the court of the Palais Royal, with the coadjutor's carriage. An instant after, the

carriages of the ladies of honour left the palace, and the gates were closed.

It struck the hour of midnight. Five minutes after, Bernouin, proceeding by the cardinal's secret passage, knocked at the queen's bedchamber. Anne of Austria opened the door herself. She was already dressed; that is to say, she had put on her stockings, and enveloped herself in a long dressing-gown.

"Is it you, Bernouin?" said she. "Is M. d'Artagnan there?"

"Yes, madame, in your oratory; he is waiting until your majesty is ready."

"I am so. Go and tell Laporte to awaken and dress the king; and then go to Marshal de Villeroy's apartment, and call him."

Bernouin bowed and left the room.

The queen proceeded to her oratory, which was lighted by one simple lamp of Venetian glass. She saw d'Artagnan standing there, awaiting her coming.

"Is it you?" said she to him.

"Yes, madame."

"Are you ready?"

"I am."

"And the cardinal?"

"Has left without accident: he awaits your majesty at Cours-la Reine."

"But in what carriage are we to go?"

"I have provided for everything: a carriage awaits your majesty below."

"Let us go to the king's apartment."

D'Artagnan bowed and followed the queen. The young Louis was already dressed, except his shoes and doublet. He had allowed this to be done in great astonishment, overwhelming Laporte with questions, to which he only answered,

"Sire, it is by the queen's command."

"The bed was turned down, and exposed the king's sheets, so much worn, as to be in holes in some places. This was one of the effects of Mazarin's niggardly parsimony.

The queen entered, and d'Artagnan remained at the door. The

boy, on seeing the queen, escaped from Laporte, and ran up to her.

The queen made a sign for d'Artagnan to approach. He obeyed.

"My son," said Anne of Austria, pointing to the musketeer, who stood calm and uncovered—"here is M. d'Artagnan, who is as brave as one of those ancient knights whose history you so much love to hear recounted by my ladies. Imprint his name upon your memory, and look at him well, that you may not forget his countenance; for this night he will render us an important service."

"The young king looked at the officer with his large proud eye, and said—"M. d'Artagnan."

"That is right, my son."

Louis gently raised his little hand, and held it out towards the musketeer, who knelt and kissed it.

"M. d'Artagnan," repeated Louis; "very well, madame."

At this moment a confused and indistinct noise was heard, as if approaching nearer.

"What is that?" demanded the queen.

"Ah!" replied d'Artagnan, using, at the same time, his fine sense of hearing and his intelligent eye, "it is the noise of the people, who are in commotion."

"We must fly," said the queen.

"Your majesty has given me the entire direction of this affair; therefore we must remain, and hear what they want."

"M. d'Artagnan!"

'I am responsible for every thing."

Nothing communicates itself so rapidly as confidence. The queen, replete with energy and courage herself, highly appreciated these two qualities in others. "Do as you like," she said; "I rely upon you."

"Will your majesty permit me, throughout this affair, to give orders in your name?"

"Command, sir."

"What do the people want now?" inquired the king.

"We shall soon know, sire," replied d'Artagnan; and he hastily left the room.

The tumult increased, and appeared entirely to surround the Palais Royal. They could hear cries, of which they could not distinguish the meaning; but it was quite evident that there was outcry and sedition.

The half-dressed king, the queen, and Laporte, remained each in the same state, and almost in the same place, listening and waiting.

Comminges, who was that night on guard at the Palais Royal, ran up: he had about two hundred men in the courts and stables, and placed them at the queen's disposal.

"Well," said Anne of Austria, on seeing d'Artagnan return, "what is it?"

"It is, madame, that a report has been spread, that the queen has quitted the Palais Royal, carrying the king away with her; and the people demand tc have proof of the contrary, or they threaten to pull down the Palais Royal."

"Oh! this time it is too much," said the queen, "and I will convince them that I am not gone."

D'Artagnan saw by the expression of the queen's countenance, that she was going to give some violent order. He went up to her, and said, in a low voice, "Has your majesty still confidence in me?"

This voice made her start. "Yes, sir—entire confidence," she replied.

"Will the queen deign to act according to my advice?"

"Speak."

"That your majesty would dismiss M. de Comminges, and order him to shut himself up, with his men, in the guard-room and the stables."

Comminges looked on d'Artagnan with that expression of jealousy, which every courtier entertains when a fresh candidate for court favour makes his appearance.

"Did you hear, Comminges?" said the queen.

D'Artagnan went up to him: with his usual sagacity, he had perceived his look of dissatisfaction. "M. de Comminges," said he, "pardon me. We are both the queen's servants, are we not?

It is now my turn to be useful to her: do not therefore envy me this good fortune."

Comminges bowed, and left the room.

"There," said d'Artagnan to himself, "now I have got one more enemy."

"And now," said the queen, turning to d'Artagnan, "what must we do? for you hear that, instead of ceasing, the noise redoubles."

"Madame," said d'Artagnan, "the people wish to see the king, and it is absolutely necessary that they should see him."

"How! They must see him! And where? On the balcony?"

"No, madame; but here, in his bed, sleeping."

"Oh, your majesty, M. d'Artagnan is quite right!" exclaimed Laporte.

The queen reflected, and then smiled, like a woman to whom duplicity is no stranger. "Very well," she muttered.

"M. Laporte," said d'Artagnan, "go and announce to the people, through the bars of the gates of the Palais Royal, that they shall soon be satisfied, and that, in five minutes, they shall not only see the king, but that they shall even see him in his bed. Add, that the king is asleep, and that the queen entreats them to be quiet, so as not to awake him."

"But not everybody—only a deputation of two or three persons."

"Everybody, madame."

"But they will delay us till daylight. Think of that!"

"It will last about a quarter of an hour. I answer for everything, madame. Believe me, I know the people: they are like a great baby, which only requires coaxing. Before the sleeping king, they will be mute, gentle, and timid as lambs."

"Go, Laporte," said the queen.

The young king went up to his mother. "Why do you comply with the people's demands?" he inquired.

"It is absolutely necessary, my son," said Anne of Austria.

"But then, if they say to me—'*you must*,' I am no longer king."

The queen remained silent.

"Sire," said d'Artagnan, "will your majesty allow me to ask you a question?"

Louis XIV. turned, astonished that any one dared thus to address him; but the queen pressed the boy's hand.

"Yes, sir," said he.

"Does your majesty remember, when you were playing in the park at Fontainebleau, or in the court of the palace of St. Germain, ever to have seen the heavens suddenly overcast, and to have heard the noise of thunder?"

"Yes, certainly."

"Well, then, however desirous your majesty might be of playing longer, this noise of the thunder said to you—'you must go in.'"

"Undoubtedly, sir; but I have also been told, that the thunder was the voice of God."

"Well, sire," replied d'Artagnan, "listen to the noise of the people, and you will perceive that it much resembles that of thunder."

In fact, at that moment, an awful noise, borne along by the night-breeze, reached their ears. It suddenly ceased.

"Observe, sire." said d'Artagnan: "they have just told the people that you are asleep; you see, therefore, that you are still king."

The queen looked with astonishment at this singular man, whose brilliant courage made him equal to the bravest, and whose acute intellect made him inferior to none.

Laporte returned.

"Well, Laporte?" demanded the queen.

"Madame," he replied, "M. d'Artagnan's prediction is accomplished: they have become calm, as if by enchantment. The doors are going to be opened to them, and in five minutes they will be here."

"Laporte," said the queen, "could you not put one of your sons in the king's place? We might go off in the meantime."

"If your majesty commands it," said Laporte, "my sons, as well as myself, are at the queen's service."

"No," said d'Artagnan; "for if only one of them should know his majesty, and should discover the subterfuge, all would be lost."

"You are right, sir—always right," said the queen. "Laporte, put the king to bed."

Laporte placed the king, dressed as he was, in bed, and then covered him up, even to the shoulders, with the clothes.

The queen bent over him and kissed his forehead.

"Pretend to sleep, Louis," said she.

"Yes," said the king, "but I do not wish one single individual of these men to touch me."

"Sire, I am here," said d'Artagnan, "and I promise you, that if any one should have the audacity to do so, he shall atone for it by his life."

"Now what must we do?" demanded the queen, "for I hear them."

"M. Laporte," said d'Artagnan, "go and meet them, and again enjoin silence. Madame, wait there, at the door; I shall stand at the head of the king's bed, ready to die for him."

Laporte left the room, the queen stood near the tapestry, and d'Artagnan glided behind the curtains.

Then the dull and continued tread of a vast multitude of men was heard. The queen herself raised the tapestry, placing her finger on her lips.

On seeing the queen, these men suddenly stopped, in an attitude of respect.

"Enter, gentlemen," said the queen.

There was then a moment of hesitation amongst all this people, which resembled shame. They had expected resistance, had calculated upon being opposed, and on being obliged to force the gates, and overthrow the guards; but the gates had opened of themselves, and the king, ostensibly at least, had no other guard at his pillow than his mother.

Those who were in front stammered, and drew back

"Enter, gentlemen," said Laporte, "since the queen permits it."

One more hardy than the others, then ventured to pass the threshold, and advanced on tip-toe. The others followed his example, and the room was silently filled, just as if these men had been the humblest and most devoted courtiers. Far beyond the door

were seen the heads of those, who, not being able to enter, were raising themselves on tip-toe.

D'Artagnan saw all this, through an opening he had made in the curtains, and, in the man who first entered, he discovered Planchet.

"Sir," said the queen, who understood that he was the leader of the band, "you have desired to see the king, and I wished to show him to you myself. Go up, and look at him, and say if we have the appearance of people who wish to escape."

"Certainly not," replied Planchet, greatly astonished by the unexpected honour that he had received.

"You will therefore tell my good and faithful Parisians," continued Anne of Austria, with a smile, the expression of which did not deceive d'Artagnan, "that you have seen the king in bed, and asleep; as also the queen, likewise prepared to go to bed."

"I will tell them, madame; and those who accompany me will say the same thing. But——"

"But what?" demanded Anne of Austria.

"Will your majesty pardon me," said Planchet, "but is it really the king who is lying in this bed?"

Anne of Austria started. "If there be any individual amongst you who knows the king," said she, "let him approach, and declare whether it be really the king who is there or not."

A man, closely enveloped in a mantle, with which he concealed his countenance, went up, leant over the bed, and looked at the king. For an instant, d'Artagnan thought that this man had some evil design, and he put his hand to his sword; but by the motion that the man with the mantle made in stooping, he disclosed a part of his countenance, and d'Artagnan recognised the coadjutor.

"It is really the king," said the man, raising himself up: "May God bless his majesty!"

"Yes!" responded the leader, in a subdued voice—"yes, may God bless his majesty!"

And all these men, who had entered furious, now passing from anger to piety, in turn blessed the royal child.

"Now, my friends," said Planchet, "let us thank the queen and depart."

All bowed low, and gradually left the room, noiseless, as they had entered it. Planchet, who had come in first, went out last.

The queen stopped him. "What is your name, my friend?" said she.

Planchet turned, much astonished by the question.

"Yes," said the queen, "I consider myself as much honoured in having received you, as if you had been a prince, and therefore I wish to know your name."

"Yes," thought Planchet, "to treat me like a prince. Thank you, all the same!"

D'Artagnan trembled lest Planchet, seduced like the crow in the fable, should tell his name, and that the queen, knowing his name, should also learn that he had formerly belonged to him.

"Madame," replied Planchet most respectfully, "my name is Dulaurier, at your service."

"Thank you, M. Dulaurier," said the queen. "And what is your profession?"

"I am a draper, madame, in the rue des Bourdonnais."

"That is all I want to know," said the queen. "I am extremely obliged to you, my dear M. Dulaurier: you will hear from me again."

"Come, come," muttered d'Artagnan, issuing from behind the curtains, "positively Master Planchet is no fool, and it is plain enough that he has been brought up at a good school."

The different actors in this strange scene remained an instant facing each other, without saying one word—the queen standing near the door, d'Artagnan half withdrawn from his concealment, the king resting upon his elbow, and ready to fall back upon the bed at the least noise that might indicate the return of the multitude. But, instead of approaching, the noise gradually retired, until it entirely ceased.

The queen drew a long breath; d'Artagnan wiped his moist brow; the king let himself slip from the bed, saying. "Let us set off!"

At this moment Laporte returned.

"Well?" demanded the queen.

"Well, madame, I followed them, even to the gates: they pro-

claimed to all their comrades, that they had seen the king, and that the queen had spoken to them; so that they are gone off quite proud and boastful."

"Oh, the wretches!" murmured the queen; "they shall pay for their audacity, I promise them."

Then turning towards d'Artagnan—"Sir," said she, "you have this night given me the best advice that I ever received in my life. Continue to do so. What ought we to do now?"

"M. Laporte," said d'Artagnan, "finish dressing the king."

"Can we depart after that?" demanded the queen.

"Whenever your majesty pleases: you have only to descend the private staircase, and will find me at the door."

"Go, sir," said the queen; "I will follow you."

D'Artagnan went down stairs. The carriage was at its post, with the musketeer on the box.

D'Artagnan took the bundle that he had desired Bernouin to lay at the musketeer's feet: it may be remembered that it contained the hat and cloak of M. de Gondy's coachman. D'Artagnan put the cloak on his shoulders and the hat on his head. The musketeer got off the box.

"Sir," said d'Artagnan, "you will go and liberate your companion, who is on guard over the coachman; you will then both mount your horses, and go to the hotel de la Chevrette, in the rue Triquetonne, to obtain my horse, and that of M. du Vallon, which you will saddle and bridle for service. You will then leave Paris, leading these horses, and will go to Cours-la-Reine. Should you find no one at Cours-la-Reine, you will proceed to St. Germain.—The king's service!"

The musketeer put his hand to his hat, and went off to execute the orders he had received.

D'Artagnan mounted the box. He had a pair of pistols at his girdle, a musketoon at his feet, and his naked sword behind him.

The queen now made her appearance. Behind her came the king, and the Duke of Anjou, his brother.

"The coadjutor's carriage!" exclaimed the queen, starting back.

"Yes, madame," said d'Artagnan, "but enter it boldly, for I am going to drive."

The queen uttered an exclamation of surprise, and got into the carriage; the king and monsieur followed her, and seated themselves by her side.

"Come in, Laporte," said the queen.

"What, madame!" said the valet-de-chambre, "in the same carriage with your majesties?"

"We must not this evening think about royal etiquette, but about the safety of the king. Come in, Laporte."

Laporte obeyed.

"Close the blinds," said d'Artagnan.

"But will not that excite suspicion, sir?" demanded the queen.

"Let her majesty make herself perfectly easy: I have my answers prepared."

They closed the blinds, and went off at a gallop down the rue Richelieu. On reaching the gate, the leader of the post came up, at the head of a dozen men, and holding a lantern in his hand.

D'Artagnan made him a sign to approach. "Do you not know this carriage?" said he to the sergeant.

"No," he answered.

"Look at the arms."

The sergeant held the lantern to the panel. "They are the arms of the coadjutor," said he.

"Hush!" said d'Artagnan, in a low voice, and leaning down, "he is making love to Madame de Guémenée."

The sergeant began to laugh. "Open the gate," said he: "I know all about this." Then going close to the blinds—"A pleasant evening, your excellence," said he.

"Oh, you indiscreet fellow!" cried d'Artagnan; "you will get me turned away."

The gate creaked upon its hinges; and d'Artagnan, seeing the road clear, applied the whip vigorously, and the horses set off at a round trot. In five minutes they joined the cardinal's carriage.

"Mousqueton," cried d'Artagnan, "raise the blinds of her majesty's carriage."

"It is he himself!" said Porthos.

"As coachman!" exclaimed Mazarin.

"And with the coadjutor's carriage!" said the queen.

"*Corpo di Dio!* M. d'Artagnan," said Mazarin, "you are worth your weight in gold!"

CHAPTER X.

HOW D'ARTAGNAN AND PORTHOS GAINED, THE ONE TWO HUNDRED AND NINETEEN, AND THE OTHER TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTEEN LOUIS, BY SELLING STRAW.

Mazarin wished to set off instantaneously for St. Germain; but the queen declared that she would wait for the persons whom she had appointed to meet her. She offered Laporte's place to the cardinal, who accepted the offer, and passed from one carriage into the other.

It was not without sufficient cause that the report had been spread, that the king would leave Paris during the night. By six o'clock in the evening, ten or a dozen persons had been admitted into the secret of this departure; and, however discreet they might be individually, they could not give the orders for their own departure, without the thing in some measure transpiring. Besides, each of these persons had one or two others in whom they were interested; and as there was no doubt that the queen quitted Paris with terrible projects of revenge, every one had warned his friends or relations; so that the rumour had run like a train of gunpowder through all the streets of the city.

The first carriage that arrived, after that of the queen, was that of M. le Prince: it contained M. de Condé, Madame the Princess, and Madame the Princess Dowager. All of them had been awoke in the middle of the night, and knew nothing of what was in agitation.

The second contained the Duke of Orleans, Madame the Duchess, the great Mademoiselle, and the Abbé de la Rivière, the inseparable and most intimate friend and counsellor of the prince.

The third contained M. de Longueville and the Prince of Conti, the brother and the brother-in-law of M. le Prince. They got out of their carriage, and went up to that of the king and queen, to offer their homage to their majesties.

The queen threw a searching glance, even to the bottom of their carriage, the door of which had been left open, and saw that it was empty.

"But where then is Madame de Longueville?" said she.

"In fact, where is my sister?" demanded M. le Prince.

"Madame de Longueville is unwell, madame," replied the duke, "and she charged me to make her apologies to your majesty."

Anne exchanged an almost imperceptible glance with the cardinal. "What do you say to that?" demanded the queen.

"I say that it is a hostage for the Parisians," replied the cardinal.

"Why did she not come?" said the prince, in a low voice, to his brother.

"Silence!" he replied: "she doubtless had her own reasons."

"She is destroying us," murmured the prince."

"She will save us," replied Conti.

The carriages now arrived in crowds. The Marshal de la Meilleraie, Marshal Villeroy, Guitaut, Comminges, Villequier, came in the line. The two musketeers also arrived with the horses of d'Artagnan and Porthos, and the latter placed themselves in their saddles. Porthos's coachman supplied d'Artagnan's place on the box of the royal carriage; and Mousqueton took the coachman's place, driving standing up, for reasons best known to himself, and looking like an antique automaton.

The queen, occupied as she was by a thousand circumstances, looked for d'Artagnan; but the Gascon, with his accustomed prudence, had buried himself in the crowd.

"Let us take the avant-guard," said he to Porthos, "and provide good lodgings for ourselves; for no one will take any trouble about us, and I feel vastly fatigued."

"As for me," said Porthos, "I am overpowered with sleep. Only to think, that we have not had the slightest fighting. Positively, the Parisians are sad blockheads!"

"Is it not, rather, that we are very clever?" said d'Artagnan.

"Perhaps so."

"And how is your fist?"

"Better. But do you think that we have got it, this time?"

"What?"

"You, your grade; and I, my title."

"Oh, faith, yes; I would almost bet anything of it. Besides, if they should not remember it, I will make them do so."

"I hear the queen's voice," said Porthos: "I believe she wants to get on horseback."

"Oh! she may wish it; but——"

"But what?"

"The cardinal does not. Gentlemen," continued d'Artagnan, addressing the two musketeers, "accompany the queen's carriage, and do not leave the doors. We go on to prepare our quarters." And d'Artagnan spurred on towards St. Germain, followed by Porthos.

"Now let us set off, gentlemen," said the queen. And the royal carriage moved on, followed by the other carriages, and more than fifty horsemen.

They reached St. Germain without accident. On descending the steps of the carriage, the queen found M. le Prince, who was standing, uncovered, to give her his hand.

"What will the Parisians say when they awake?" said Anne of Austria, radiant with joy.

"It is war," said the prince.

"Well, let it be war! Have we not the conqueror of Rocroy, of Nordlingen, and of Lens, with us?"

The prince bowed gratefully

It was now three o'clock in the morning. The queen first entered the chateau, and the rest followed her. About two hundred persons had accompanied her flight.

"Gentlemen," said the queen, laughing, "you will lodge in the chateau, and you will not want room; but, as there was no expectation of our coming here, I am informed that there are only three beds—one for the king, one for myself—"

"And one for Mazarin," said the prince, in a low voice.

"And am I to sleep on the floor?" said Gaston d'Orleans, with an anxious smile.

"No, your excellence," said Mazarin, "for the third bed is destined for your highness."

"But you?" demanded the prince.

"As for me, I shall not go to bed at all—I must work," said Mazarin.

Gaston departed for the chamber where this bed was, without disturbing himself in the least as to where and how his wife and daughter were to be lodged.

"Well, now, as for me, I shall go to bed," said d'Artagnan. "Come with me, Porthos."

Porthos followed his friend, with that implicit confidence that he had in his intellect.

They walked side by side, on the place of the chateau, Porthos gazing with open eyes at d'Artagnan, who was making a calculation on his fingers.

"Four hundred, at a pistole each, make four hundred pistoles."

"Yes," said Porthos, "four hundred pistoles. But what have we to do with four hundred pistoles?"

"A pistole is not enough," continued d'Artagnan: "it is worth a louis."

"What is worth a louis?"

"Four hundred at one louis, make four hundred louis."

"Four hundred?" said Porthos.

"Yes: there are two hundred; and they will want at least two for each person. At two for each, that makes four hundred."

"But four hundred what?"

"Listen!" said d'Artagnan. And then, as there were all sorts of persons who were looking with astonishment at the arrival of the court, he finished his sentence in a whisper into Porthos's ear.

"I understand," said Porthos—"I understand wonderfully well, by my faith. Two hundred louis each! What a glorious thing! But what will they say of us?"

"Let them say what they like. Besides, how will they know that it is us?"

"But whom will you entrust with the distribution?"

"Is not Mousqueton there?"

"And my livery?" said Porthos: "they will recognise my livery!"

"Let him turn his coat."

"You are always right, my dear d'Artagnan," exclaimed Porthos. "But where the plague do you find all those ideas that you have?"

D'Artagnan smiled.

The two friends went down the first street they came to. Porthos knocked at the door of the house to the right, whilst d'Artagnan knocked at that on the left.

"We want some straw," said they.

"We have none, sir," replied the people who opened the doors; "but apply to the dealer in forage."

"And where does he live?"

"The last great gate in the street."

"To the right or left?"

"On the left."

"And is there any other person in St. Germain from whom it can be procured?"

"There is the landlord of the *Mouton-couronné*, and Fat Louis, the farmer."

"Where do they live?"

"In the rue Ursulines."

"Both of them?"

"Yes."

"Very well."

The two friends having had the latter places pointed out to them as exactly as the first, d'Artagnan first went to the house of the dealer in forage, and bought from him a hundred and fifty bundles of straw, for the sum of three pistoles. He then betook himself to the innkeeper, where he found Porthos, who had just purchased two hundred bundles for about the same sum; and, lastly, Louis the

farmer sold them a hundred and eighty—in all, four hundred and thirty bundles. St. Germain was thus exhausted.

All this clearance only occupied them half an hour; and Mousqueton, duly instructed, was placed at the head of this impromptu commerce. They charged him not to let a single straw leave his hands under a louis the bundle, and made him responsible for four hundred and thirty louis. Mousqueton shook his head: he did not at all comprehend the speculation of the two friends.

D'Artagnan, carrying three bundles of straw, returned to the chateau, where every one, shivering with cold and overpowered with sleep, was envying the king, the queen, and monsieur, on their camp beds.

D'Artagnan's entrance into the great saloon produced an universal burst of laughter. But he pretended not even to perceive that he was the object of general observation; and began to arrange his bed of straw with so much skill, address, and gaiety, that all these poor sleepy mortals, who had no means of sleeping, began to feel their mouths water.

"Straw!" they cried: "straw! where can one find straw?"

"I will show you," said Porthos, with the most disinterested kindness.

And he conducted these amateurs to Mousqueton, who generously distributed the bundles at a louis a-piece. They thought it rather dear; but when one is very sleepy, who is there who would not pay two or three louis for some hours good sleep?"

D'Artagnan gave up his bed to every one who requested him; so that he began ten fresh ones; and as he was supposed to have paid, like the others, a louis for each bundle, he thus pocketed about thirty louis in less than half an hour. At five in the morning, the straw was worth four louis the bundle, and no more was to be had.

D'Artagnan had taken care to put aside four bundles for himself. Having secured the key of the closet where he had concealed them, he went, accompanied by Porthos, to settle with Mousqueton, who, with great simplicity, and like a good steward as he was, delivered four hundred and thirty louis to him, and yet retained one hundred for himself.

Mousqueton, who knew nothing of what had taken place at the chateau, could not imagine how the idea of selling straw had not come sooner into his mind.

D'Artagnan put the gold into his hat, and, as they returned, settled his accounts with Porthos. They each received two hundred and fifteen louis.

Porthos then first recollected that he had got no straw for himself. He therefore went back to Mousqueton, but he had sold even to the last straw, keeping nothing for himself. He then returned to find d'Artagnan, who, thanks to his four bundles of straw, was just manufacturing, and enjoying by anticipation, a bed so soft, so well heaped up at the head, and so well covered at the feet, that it would have excited the envy of the king himself, if the king had not slept so well in his own.

D'Artagnan would not derange his bed for Porthos at any price; but, in consideration of four louis, which he counted him down, he agreed that Porthos should sleep with him.

He laid his sword at his head, and his pistols by his side, spread his cloak over his feet, placed his hat on his cloak, and stretched himself voluptuously on the straw, which crackled under him. He was already begining to court those soft dreams, which the possession of two hundred louis, gained in a quarter of an hour, naturally engender, when a voice, that resounded at the door of the saloon, made him start.

"M. d'Artagnan!" it cried—"M. d'Artagnan!"

"Here!" said Porthos, "here!" For Porthos comprehended, that, if d'Artagnan went away, he should have the bed to himself.

An officer approached, and d'Artagnan raised himself on his elbow.

"Are you M. d'Artagnan?" said the officer.

"Yes, sir; what do you want with me?"

"I am come in search of you."

"From whom?"

"From his eminence."

"Inform his eminence that I am going to sleep, and recommend him to do the same."

"His eminence is not in bed, nor does he intend to go to bed, and he wants you immediately."

"The plague take Mazarin, who does not know how to sleep at proper times and seasons!" he muttered. "What can he want with me? Is it to make me a captain? In that case I pardon him."

And the musketeer got up, grumbling; took his sword, his pistols, his hat, and his cloak, and followed the officer; whilst Porthos, remaining the sole and undivided possessor of the bed, endeavoured to imitate the beautiful arrangements of his friend.

"M. d'Artagnan," said the cardinal, on seeing him for whom he had sent so inopportunely, "I have not forgotten the zeal with which you have served me, and I am going to give you a proof of it."

"Good!" thought d'Artagnan: "this begins well."

Mazarin looked at the musketeer, and saw his countenance expand.

"Ah! your excellence."

"M. d'Artagnan, are you really desirous of becoming a captain?"

"Yes, your excellence."

"And does your friend still desire to be a baron?"

"He is at this very moment dreaming that he is one."

"Then," said Mazarin, drawing from his portfolio that letter that he had before shown to d'Artagnan, "take this despatch, and carry it to England."

D'Artagnan looked at the letter: it was without address

"Am I not to know to whom I am to deliver it?"

"On reaching London you will know; and you are not to remove the envelope until you do reach London."

"And what are my instructions?"

"To obey the individual, to whom this letter is addressed, in every particular."

D'Artagnan was going to ask further questions, when Mazarin added:

"You will depart for Boulogne, where you will find, at the English Arms, a young gentleman named Mordaunt."

"Yes, your excellence; and what am I to do with this gentleman?"

"You must follow him wherever he may lead you."

D'Artagnan looked at the cardinal with an air of great astonishment.

"Now, you have received your orders," said Mazarin, "go,"

"It easy enough to say go," replied d'Artagnan; "but, to go, money is wanted, and I have none."

"Ah!" said Mazarin, scratching his ear, "do you say that you have no money?"

"No, your excellence."

"But that diamond, which I gave you yesterday evening?"

"I wish to keep it, as a memorial of your eminence."

Mazarin sighed.

"Living is mighty dear in England, your excellence, and more especially for one who is sent on an extraordinary mission."

"Hum!" said Mazarin "it is a mighty sober country, and they live very simply since the revolution. But never mind."

He opened a drawer, and took out a purse. "What do you say to these thousand crowns?"

D'Artagnan thrust out his lower lip to an unconscionable length. "I say, your eminence, that it is very little; for I certainly shall not go alone."

"I know that well enough," replied Mazarin: "M. du Vallon will accompany you, the worthy gentleman; for, after you, my dear M. d'Artagnan, he is certainly the man in France whom I love and esteem the most."

"Then, your excellence," said d'Artagnan, pointing to the purse, of which Mazarin still retained possession—"then, if you love and esteem him so much, you understand—"

"So be it! On that consideration I will add two hundred crowns."

"The stingy scoundrel!" murmured d'Artagnan. "But, on our return," he added aloud, "we may at least expect, may we not—M. Porthos, his barony, and I my grade?"

"By the faith of Mazarin!"

"I should much prefer any other oath," said d'Artagnan in a low

voice. Then aloud:—"May I not present my respects to the queen?"

"Her majesty is asleep," replied Mazarin with great quickness, "and you must set off without delay. Go, therefore, sir."

"One word more, your excellence, Should there be any fighting where I am going, shall I fight?"

"You will do whatever the person to whom that letter is addressed may command you."

"Very well, your excellence," said d'Artagnan, extending his hand to receive the bag; "and I offer you my respects."

D'Artagnan dropped the bag gently into his large pocket. Then turning towards the officer, "Sir," said he "would you be so kind as to go and wake M. du Vallon by the command of his eminence, and tell him that I am waiting for him at the stables."

The officer went off immediately, and with so much eagerness, that he appeared to d'Artagnan to have some interested motive in it.

Porthos had just settled himself on his bed, and, according to his usual custom, began to snore most harmoniously, when he felt some one slap him on the shoulder. He thought that it was d'Artagnan, and did not stir.

"From the cardinal," said the officer.

"Hum!" said Porthos, opening his eyes wide: "what do you say?"

"I say that his eminence sends you to England, and that M. d'Artagnan is waiting for you at the stables."

Porthos heaved a profound sigh, arose, took his sword, his pistols, his hat, and his cloak, and went out, casting a lingering look of regret at the bed on which he had promised himself such a sweet sleep.

Scarcely had he turned his back, before the officer was installed in his place; and he had not got beyond the threshold of the door, before his successor was snoring loud enough to split the ceiling of the room. It was quite natural: he was the only one in all that assemblage, except the king, the queen, and Gaston d'Orleans, who slept gratis.

CHAPTER XI.

NEWS OF ATHOS AND ARAMIS.

D'Artagnan had gone straight to the stables. The day had just dawned. He found his horse, and that of Porthos, fastened to a rack, but it was an empty rack. Pitying the poor animals, he went towards a corner of the stable, where he saw the glitter of a small quantity of straw, which had doubtless escaped the clearance of the night; but in collecting this straw together with his foot, the end of his boot encountered a round body, which, happening to be touched in a tender part, uttered a cry, and rose up on its knees, rubbing its eyes. It was Mousqueton, who, having no straw for himself, had made free with that of the horses.

"Mousqueton!" said d'Artagnan: "come, come; we must be off! we must be off!"

Mousqueton, on recognising the voice of his master's friend, rose up hastily, and, in rising, let fall some of those louis he had gained in such a questionable manner.

"Aha!" said d'Artagnan, picking up one of them, and putting it to his nose, "here is some gold that has a very singular odour: it smells of straw."

Mousqueton blushed so ingenuously, and appeared so much embarrassed, that the Gascon began to laugh, and said to him,

"Porthos would be angry, my dear M. Mouston; but, as for me, I pardon you. Only, let us remember that this ought to serve as a cure for our wound, and let us be gay. Come along!"

Mousqueton instantly assumed a most joyous look, saddled his master's horse with great activity, and mounted his own without making any grimaces.

Whilst this was passing, Porthos arrived with a very dissatisfied look, and was quite astonished at finding d'Artagnan resigned, and Mousqueton almost joyful.

"Ah!" said he, "we have got them then—you, your grade, and I, my barony."

"We are going to look for the commissions," said d'Artagnan, "and, on our return, Master Mazarin will sign them."

"And where are we going?" demanded Porthos.

"To Paris, in the first place," replied d'Artagnan: "I want to settle some business there."

"Let us go to Paris, then," said Porthos.

And, accordingly, they both departed for Paris. On reaching the gates, they were quite astonished at seeing the menacing aspect of the capital. Around an overturned and shattered carriage, the people were uttering imprecations, whilst the occupants of the vehicle, an old man and two females, who had wished to escape, were prisoners.

But when d'Artagnan and Porthos demanded permission to enter, they were received with every species of welcome. Being taken for deserters from the royal party, the people wished to attach them to their own.

"What is the king doing?" they were asked.

"He is asleep."

"And the Spaniard?"

"She is dreaming."

"And the cursed Italian?"

"He watches: therefore remain firm; for be assured that, as they went away, it was for some purpose. But after all, as you are the strongest party, do not wreak your vengeance on women and old men. Let these ladies go, and reserve yourselves for real and grand emergencies."

The people received this advice favourably, and released the ladies, who thanked d'Artagnan by a most eloquent look.

"Now, forward again!" said d'Artagnan.

And they continued their journey, passing through barricades, stepping over chains, pushing, pushed, interrogated, and interrogating in turn.

At the place du Palais Royal, d'Artagnan saw a sergeant, who was drilling five or six hundred citizens: it was Planchet, who was bringing into exercise, for the benefit of the urban militia, the

knowledge he had gained in the regiment of Piedmont. On passing before d'Artagnan, he recognised his old master.

"Good morning to you, M. d'Artagnan," said Planchet, with a proud and haughty air.

"Good morning to you, M. Dulaurier," replied d'Artagnan.

Planchet stopped short, fixing his large astonished eyes on d'Artagnan. The first rank, seeing their leader stop, stopped also; the other ranks did the same, from the first to the last, each, in turn, treading on the heels of his comrades in front.

"These citizens are horribly ridiculous," said d'Artagnan to Porthos. And he moved on again.

In five minutes more they were at the hotel de la Chevrette. The fair Madeline rushed out to meet d'Artagnan.

"My dear Madame Turquaine," said d'Artagnan, "if you have any money, hide it; if you have any jewels, conceal them; if you have any debtors, make them pay you; if you have any creditors, do not pay them!"

"And why?" demanded Madeline.

"Because Paris is going to be reduced to ashes, neither more nor less than Babylon, of which you have doubtless heard."

"And do you leave me at such a time?"

"Instantaneously," replied d'Artagnan.

"And where are you going?"

"If you could tell me, you would render me a positive service."

"Ah! my God! my God!"

"Have you any letters for me?" demanded d'Artagnan, making a sign to his hostess that she might spare her lamentations, as they were altogether superfluous.

"There is one, which has just arrived." And she gave the letter to d'Artagnan.

"From Athos!" exclaimed d'Artagnan, who knew the long and firm handwriting of their friend.

"Ah!" said Porthos, "let us see what he says."

D'Artagnan opened the letter, and read:—

"Dear d'Artagnan, dear du Vallon,

"My good friends, perhaps you now hear from me for the last

time. Aramis and I are very unhappy; but God, our own courage, and the recollection of your friendship, sustains us. Think of Raoul. I remind you of the papers that are at Blois; and, if, in two months and a half, you hear nothing of us, take possession of them. Embrace the viscount with all your heart for your devoted friend,

"ATHOS."

"Embrace him! By Jove, that I will!" said d'Artagnan. And, besides, he is on our road; and should he have the misfortune to lose our poor Athos, from that day he becomes my son."

"And as for me," said Porthos, "I make him my universal legatee."

"But let us see: Athos says something else."

"Should you meet a certain M. Mordaunt in any of your travels, distrust him. I cannot say more to you on this subject in my letter."

"M. Mordaunt!" said d'Artagnan, with great surprise.

"M. Mordaunt! Very well," said Porthos, "we will remember it. But see: there is a postscript from Aramis."

"So there is," said d'Artagnan. And he read:—

"We conceal from you where we are, dear friends, knowing your brotherly devotion, and being convinced that you would come and die with us."

"*Sacrebleu!*" broke in Porthos, with an explosion of anger that made Mousqueton jump to the other end of the room; "are they then in danger of their lives?"

D'Artagnan continued:—

"Athos bequeaths Raoul to you, and I bequeath you a vengeance. Should you happily lay hands on a certain Mordaunt, tell Porthos to take him into a corner, and to twist his neck. I dare not tell you any more in a letter.

"ARAMIS."

"If that's all," said Porthos, "it is easy enough to do."

"On the contrary," said d'Artagnan, with a gloomy air, "it is impossible."

"And why so?"

"It is precisely this very M. Mordaunt whom we are going to meet at Boulogne, and with whom we are going to England."

"Well, but if, instead of going to meet this M. Mordaunt, we were to go and join our friends?" said Porthos, with a gesture sufficient to daunt an army.

"I thought of that," said d'Artagnan; "but this letter has neither date nor stamp."

"That is true," said Porthos. And he began to pace up and down the room like a madman, now gesticulating, and then drawing his sword half way out of its scabbard.

As for d'Artagnan, he remained standing like a man in utter consternation, with the most profound affliction painted on his countenance.

"Ah! it is a sad thing," said he. "Athos insults us: he wishes to die without us. It is a sad thing!"

Mousqueton, seeing their great despondency, was melted to tears in his corner.

"Come, come," said d'Artagnan, "all this does no good. Let us go and embrace Raoul, as we said; and perhaps he may have heard something about Athos."

"I pity him who should cross my master at this moment," said Mousqueton: "I would not give a sous for his skin."

They mounted their horses and departed. On reaching the rue St. Denis, the friends found a vast concourse of people assembled. It was M. de Beaufort, who had just arrived from the Vendômois, and whom the coadjutor was exhibiting to the joyous and surprised Parisians. With M. de Beaufort, they considered themselves as henceforth invincible.

The two friends went down a small street, to avoid meeting the duke, and reached the barrier of St. Denis.

"Is it true," said the guards to the two cavaliers, "that M. de Beaufort has reached Paris?"

"Nothing can be more true," replied d'Artagnan, "and the proof of it is, that he has sent us forward to meet his father, M. de Vendôme, who is also coming up."

"Long live M. de Beaufort?" cried the guards. And they made way respectfully, to allow the messengers of the great prince to pass.

Once past the barrier, and the road was actually devoured by these men, who were incapable of fatigue or discouragement. Their horses flew, and they never ceased talking of Athos and Aramis.

Mousqueton suffered incredible torments; but the excellent servant consoled himself with the reflection that his two masters experienced other and greater sufferings. For he had come to consider d'Artagnan as his second master, and obeyed him even more promptly and implicitly than Porthos.

The camp was between St. Omer and Lambe. The two friends proceeded towards the camp, and announced to the army the news of the flight of the king and queen, of which, as yet, they had only heard vague rumours. They found Raoul near his tent, lying on a bundle of fodder, from which his horse was furtively stealing an occasional mouthful. The young man's eyes were red, and he appeared much depressed. The Marshal Grammont and the Count de Guiche, were at Paris, and the poor youth found himself very lonely.

In a few moments Raoul raised his eyes, and saw the two cavaliers looking at him: he recognised them, and ran to them with open arms.

"Oh! it is you, my dear friends!" he exclaimed: "are you come for me? Will you take me with you? Do you bring me any intelligence of my guardian?"

"Have you not then received any yourself?" demanded d'Artagnan.

"Alas! no, sir; and I really cannot think what has become of him. I am, therefore, so anxious as to be quite unhappy." And two large tears rolled down the youth's bronzed cheeks.

Porthos turned away his head, that what was passing in his heart might not be betrayed in his honest countenance.

"What the deuce!" said d'Artagnan, more affected than he had been for a long time: "do not despond, my young friend: if you have not received any letters from the count, we have one."

"Oh, really!" cried Raoul.

"And a very satisfactory one too," said d'Artagnan, seeing the delight that this news gave the young man.

"Have you brought it with you?" inquired Raoul.

"Yes—that is to say, I had it," replied d'Artagnan, pretending to search for it: "wait now—it ought to be here, in my pocket; it talks about his return—does it not, Porthos?"

All Gascon as he was, d'Artagnan did not wish to take the whole burden of this lie on his own shoulders.

"Yes," said Porthos, coughing.

"Oh! give it to me," cried the young man.

"Eh!—And I read it so very lately, too!—Can I have lost it? Oh, bad luck to me! there is a hole in my pocket."

"Oh, yes, M. Raoul," said Mousqueton, "and the letter was so satisfactory. These gentlemen read it to me, and I quite wept for joy."

"But at least, M. d'Artagnan, you know where he is?" demanded Raoul, partly restored to serenity.

"Oh, yes, certainly, I know that," said d'Artagnan; "but it is a secret."

"Not to me, I hope?"

"No, not to you; therefore I am going to tell you where he is."

Porthos looked at d'Artagnan with his eyes distended with astonishment.

"Where the deuce shall I say that he is, so that he may not attempt to go and join him?" muttered d'Artagnan.

"Well, now, where is he, sir?" said Raoul, in his soft and coaxing voice.

"He is at Constantinople!"

"Among the Turks!" cried Raoul, quite frightened: "good God! what are you telling me?"

"What, does this frighten you?" said d'Artagnan. "Bah! what are the Turks to such men as the Count de la Fère and the Abbé d'Herblay?"

"Ah! his friend is with him?" said Raoul. "That reassures me a little."

"Has he not talent then, that devil of a d'Artagnan!" said Porthos to himself, quite thunderstruck by his friend's subtilty.

"Now," said d'Artagnan, anxious to change the conversation, "here are fifty pistoles, which the count sent by the same courier. I presume that you have not too much money, and that they are welcome."

"I have yet twenty pistoles, sir."

"Very well; take these just the same: that will make seventy."

"And if you want any more," said Porthos, putting his hand to his fob.

"No, I thank you," said Raoul, colouring—"thank you a thousand times, sir."

At this moment Olivain made his appearance.

"By the way," said d'Artagnan, in such a manner that the lacquey might hear it, "are you satisfied with Olivain?"

"Yes, pretty well for that."

Olivain pretended not to have heard, and entered the tent.

"And what fault do you find with the rascal?"

"He is a glutton," answered Raoul.

"Oh, sir!" said Olivain, coming forward at this accusation.

"He is a bit of a thief."

"Oh! sir, oh!"

"And, above all, he is a desperate coward."

"Oh! oh! oh! sir, you dishonour me," said Olivain.

"Zounds!" cried d'Artagnan, "understand, Master Olivain, that persons of our stamp do not allow ourselves to be served by cowards. Rob your master, eat his sweetmeats and preserves, and drink his wine; but, *cap de dion*, be not a poltroon, or I will cut off your ears. Look at M. Mouston there: ask him to show you the honourable wounds he has received; and observe what a dignity his habitual bravery has impressed upon his countenance."

Mousqueton was in the third heavens, and would have embraced d'Artagnan had he dared. In the meantime, he determined, in his own mind, to get himself killed for him on the first opportunity.

"Dismiss this rascal, Raoul," said d'Artagnan "for if he be a coward, he will some day dishonour you."

"M. Raoul says that I am a coward," exclaimed Olivain, "because, the other day, he wished to fight a cornet of the regiment of Grammont, and I refused to accompany him."

"Master Olivain, a lacquey should always be obedient," said d'Artagnan, with great severity.

And then, taking him aside:—"You did well, if your master was wrong, and here is a crown for you; but if he is insulted, and you do not let yourself be cut in pieces for him, I will cut out your tongue, and wipe your face with it. Therefore, remember!"

Olivain bowed, and put the crown into his pocket.

"And now, my dear Raoul," said d'Artagnan, "we are going, M. du Vallon and myself, as ambassadors. I cannot tell you for what object, for I do not know it myself; but if you should want anything, write to Madame Turquaine, hotel de la Chevrette, and draw upon that chest as on that of a banker—with discretion, however; for I warn you that it is not so well garnished as that of M. d'Emery."

And having embraced his temporary ward, he turned him over to the vigorous arms of Porthos, who raised him from the earth, and held him for a moment suspended against the noble heart of the formidable giant.

"Come," said d'Artagnan, "we must be off."

And they resumed their journey towards Boulogne, which they reached towards the evening, their horses bathed in sweat, and white with foam.

At about ten paces from the spot where they slackened their speed, and just before entering the town, they saw a young man dressed in black, who appeared to be waiting for some one, and who, from the moment that he had seen them, had not once lost sight of them.

D'Artagnan went near him, and perceiving that he still continued to regard him. "Ha, my friend," said he, "I do not like any one to measure me."

"Sir," said the young man, without appearing to notice d'Artagnan's address, "pray, are you not come from Paris?"

D'Artagnan thought that it was some inquisitive person, who

wished to learn news from the capital. "Yes, sir," he replied in a milder tone.

"Are you not to lodge at the English Arms

"Yes, sir."

"Are you not entrusted with a mission from his eminence, Cardinal Mazarin?"

"Yes, sir."

"In that case," said the young man, "I am the person to whom you are commissioned—I am M. Mordaunt."

"Ah!" said d'Artagnan, in a low voice, "and him whom Athos advised me to distrust."

'Ah!" murmured Porthos, "him whom Aramis wished me to strangle."

Both of them looked earnestly at the young man, who, mistaking the expression of their regard, said,

"Do you doubt my declaration? In that case, I am ready to give you every necessary proof."

"No, sir," replied d'Artagnan, "and we place ourselves under your directions."

"Well, then, gentlemen, let us depart without delay; for this is the last day that the cardinal appointed me to wait. My vessel is ready; and if you had not come, I should have departed without you. General Cromwell must be impatiently expecting my return."

"Ah!" said d'Artagnan, "then it is to General Cromwell that we are sent?"

"Have you not a letter for him?" demanded the young man

"I have a letter with a double envelope, the first of which I was not to remove till I reached London; but since you tell me to whom it is addressed, it is useless to wait till that time."

D'Artagnan tore open the cover. It was, in fact, addressed "To M. Oliver Cromwell, general of the troops of the English nation."

"Ah!" said d'Artagnan, "a singular commission."

"Who is this Oliver Cromwell?" said Porthos in a low voice.

"An old brewer," replied d'Artagnan.

"And does Mazarin want to make a speculation in beer, as we did in straw?" demanded Porthos.

"Come, come, gentlemen," said Mordaunt, quite impatient, "let us take our departure."

"What!" cried Porthos—"what, without our supper? Cannot this M. Cromwell wait a little?"

"Yes, but I——" said Mordaunt.

"Well, and you," said Porthos: "what then?"

"I am in a great hurry."

"Oh, if it is for you," said Porthos, "that is nothing to me; and I will sup, either with your permission, or without your permission."

The unsettled and vague look of the young man lighted up, and appeared about to emit a flash; but he restrained himself.

"Sir," continued d'Artagnan, "you must make allowance for two famished travellers. Besides, our supper will not delay you long. We will spur on to the hotel. Do you go to the port, and we will eat a morsel, and be there almost as soon as you are."

"Just as you please, gentlemen, provided we depart," said Mordaunt.

"That is a happy thing," murmured Porthos

"The name of the vessel?" demanded d'Artagnan.

"The *Standard*."

And giving their spurs to the horses, they hastened to the hotel.

"What do you say to this young man?" demanded d'Artagnan, as they went along.

"I say, that he does not suit me at all," replied Porthos, "and that I felt a violent inclination to follow Aramis's advice."

"Take good care that you do not, however," said d'Artagnan: "he is an envoy of General Cromwell's; and we should be but poorly received, I fancy, if he were told that we had twisted the neck of his confidant."

"That does not signify," said Porthos; "I have always remarked that Aramis gives excellent advice."

"Listen," said d'Artagnan. "When our embassy is finished—',

"And then?"

"Should he conduct us back to France—"

"Well, what then?"

"Why—then—we will see."

The two friends reached the hotel, where they made an excellent supper, after which they went down to the harbour. A brig was ready to set sail, and they saw Mordaunt traversing its deck with impatience.

"It is incredible," said d'Artagnan, whilst the boat was taking them on board the *Standard*—"it is quite astonishing how much this young man resembles some one I once knew, but I cannot tell who it is."

They reached the ladder, and the next minute they were on board. But the embarcation of the horses occupied more time, and the brig could not weigh anchor before eight o'clock in the evening.

The young man stamped with impatience, and ordered that every inch of canvass should be spread.

Porthos, almost worn out by three sleepless nights, and a journey of seventy leagues on horseback, had retired to the cabin, and slept.

D'Artagnan, surmounting his repugnance to Mordaunt, walked up and down the deck with him, and related a thousand anecdotes to make him speak.

Mousqueton was seasick.

CHAPTER XII.

"THE FAITHLESS, PERJURED SCOT,
WHO SOLD HIS MONARCH FOR A GROAT!

Our readers must now leave the *Standard* to glide smoothly on, not towards London, where Porthos and d'Artagnan thought they were going, but towards Durham, where letters, received whilst he tarried at Boulogne, had commanded Mordaunt to proceed; and must follow us to the royal camp, on the banks of the Tyne, near the town of Newcastle.

The tents of a small army are there placed, between two rivers, on the frontiers of Scotland, but on the English soil. It is midnight. Some men, who, by their naked legs and short kilts, their chequered plaids, and the feather that adorns their bonnets, are easily perceived to be Highlanders, are keeping a careless watch. The moon, gliding behind large clouds, occasionally shines on the muskets of the sentinels, as they cross her path, and strongly defines the walls, roofs, and steeples of the town, which Charles I. had just surrendered to the parliamentary troops, as he had already done Oxford and Newark, which held out for him in hope of an accommodation.

At one of the extremities of the camp, near an immense tent in which the Scottish officers were holding a species of council, presided over by their general, the old Earl of Leven, a man, dressed as a cavalier, was sleeping on the grass, with his right hand resting on his sword.

About fifty paces distant, another man, dressed also as a cavalier, was talking with a Scottish sentinel; and, thanks to the knowledge he appeared to have acquired of the English language, although a foreigner, he managed to understand the Perthshire dialect of the sentinel with whom he conversed.

Just as it struck one o'clock in the town of Newcastle, the sleeper awoke; and after making all the contortions that a man generally does when waking from a profound sleep, he looked earnestly around him; seeing that he was alone, he arose, and making a circuit, went past the man who was talking to the sentinel. This person had, in reply to his questions, doubtless obtained all the information he required; for soon afterwards he took leave of the sentinel, and, without hesitation, followed the path taken by the cavalier who had just passed him, and who now, under the shadow of a tent, stopped, and waited for him.

"Well, now, my dear friend?" he said, in the purest French that was ever spoken from Rouen to Tours.

"Well, my friend, there is no time to be lost—we must warn the king."

"What is the matter, then?"

"It would take too long to tell you; and you will hear it

presently. Besides, one word uttered here, might ruin everything. Let us go, therefore, and find Lord de Winter."

They both proceeded to the other end of the camp; but as it did not cover more than five hundred square yards, they soon reached the tent they sought."

"Is your master asleep, Tony?" said one of the cavaliers to a domestic who was lying in the first division of the tent, which served as an ante-room.

"No, count," replied the lacquey, "I do not think that he is, or it must be very recently; as he was walking in his tent for two hours after he left the king, and his steps have not ceased more than ten minutes. Besides," continued the lacquey, raising the door of the tent, "you can easily ascertain."

In fact, de Winter was seated near an opening that served as a window, and allowed the night air to enter: he was sorrowfully gazing at the moon, which, as we have already said, was sailing amid the large black clouds. The two friends approached de Winter, who, with his head resting on his hand, was looking at the heavens. He had not heard them enter, and remained in the same attitude, until he felt some one place his hand upon his shoulder. Then he turned round, recognised Athos and Aramis, and stretched out his hand.

"Have you remarked," said he, "that the moon is blood-red this evening?"

"No," replied Athos; "it seemed to me to be the same as usual."

"Look, chevalier," said de Winter

"I confess," said Aramis, "that I agree with the Count de la Fère, and that I can see nothing peculiar in the moon's appearance."

"Baron," said Athos, "in a situation so precarious as ours, it is the earth, and not the heavens, that we must examine. Have you watched the Scots, and are you sure of them?"

"The Scots?" demanded de Winter: "what Scots?"

"Why ours!" said Athos—"those whom the king has trusted—the Scots of the Earl of Leven."

"No," said de Winter. Then he added: "So you tell me that you cannot see, as I do, the red colour that covers the heavens?"

"Not in the least," answered Athos and Aramis at the same time.

"Tell me," said de Winter, still occupied with the same idea, "is there not a tradition in France, that the evening before Henry IV. was assassinated, when he was playing at chess with M. de Bassompierre, he saw some spots of blood on the chess-board?"

"Yes," replied Athos, "and the marshal has often told me of it himself."

"That is it," murmured de Winter—"and the next day Henry was murdered."

"But what connexion has this vision of Henry IV. with you, baron?" demanded Athos.

"None whatever, gentlemen; and, in truth, I am wrong to trouble you with such things; more especially as your arrival in my tent, at such an hour, declares that you must be the bearers of some important intelligence."

"Yes, my lord," said Athos, "I want to speak to the king."

"To the king? But he is asleep."

"I have something of great importance to disclose to him."

"Can it not be deferred till to-morrow?"

"He must know it immediately; even now, perhaps, it is too late."

"Enter, then, gentlemen," said de Winter.

De Winter's tent was pitched by the side of the royal tent, and a kind of corridor led from the one to the other. This passage was not guarded by a sentinel, but by the king's confidential valet; so that, in any emergency, Charles might be able to communicate instantaneously with his faithful servant.

"These gentlemen accompany me," said de Winter.

The lacquey bowed, and permitted them to pass.

There, on a camp bed, clothed in his dark-coloured doublet, with his long boots on, his belt loosened, and his hat near him, lay Charles I., asleep, having yielded to unconquerable drowsiness. The three men advanced towards him, and Athos, who was in front, looked

down for an instant in silence on that noble and pallid countenance, encircled by his black hair, which adhered to his forehead, moistened by the agonies of a troubled repose, and marbled by long blue veins, which seemed to be swelled by tears still o'ercharging his wearied eyelids.

Athos emitted a deep sigh, which awakened the king, so lightly did he sleep. He opened his eyes.

"Ah," he said, raising himself on his elbow, "is it the Count de la Fère?"

"Yes, sire," responded Athos.

"You watch whilst I sleep, and you are come to tell me some news?"

"Alas! sire," replied Athos, "your majesty has guessed aright."

"Then the news is bad," said the king, with a melancholy smile.

"Yes, sire."

"Never mind: the messenger is welcome; and you can never present yourself before me without giving me pleasure—you, whose devotion distinguishes neither country nor misfortune—you, who were sent to me by Henrietta—whatever may be the intelligence you bring me, speak with confidence."

"Sire, Cromwell has arrived at Newcastle during the night."

"Ah!" said the king, "to fight me?"

"No, sire—to buy you."

"What are you saying?"

"I say, sire, that four hundred thousand pounds are owing to the Scottish troops."

"For arrears of pay? Yes, I know it: for nearly a year, my brave and faithful Scots have been fighting for honour."

Athos smiled. "Well, sire, although honour may be a fine thing, it seems they are tired of fighting for it; and this very night they have sold you for two hundred thousand pounds, the half of what was due to them."

"Impossible!" exclaimed the king: "the Scots sell their king for two hundred thousand pounds!"

"The Jews sold their God for thirty pieces of silver."

"And who is the Judas who makes this infamous bargain?"

"The Earl of Leven."

"Are you sure of this, sir?"

"I heard it with my own ears."

The king heaved a deep sigh, as if his heart was breaking, and his head fell upon his hands.

"Oh, the Scots!" he exclaimed—"the Scots, whom I called my most faithful subjects!—the Scots, in whom I confided when I might have fled to Oxford!—the Scots, my countrymen!—the Scots, my brethren! But are you quite certain, sir?"

"Extended behind Lord Leven's tent, the canvass of which I lifted up, I saw and heard everything."

"And when is this detestable bargain to be ratified?"

"This very morning: therefore your majesty may perceive that no time must be lost."

"For what? Say you not that I am sold?"

"To pass the Tyne, reach Scotland, and join Montrose, who will not sell you."

"And what shall I do in Scotland? A partisan warfare! It is unworthy of a king."

"The example of Robert Bruce will be your excuse, sire."

"No, no; I have struggled too long! If they have sold me, let them give me up, and let the eternal disgrace of such treason rest upon their heads."

"Sire," said Athos, "perhaps a king ought to act in that manner; but a husband and a father must act differently. I came here in the name of your wife and daughter; and in their name, and in that of the two children that you have in London, I say to you—live, sire, for God wishes it!"

The king arose, tightened his belt, girded on his sword, and wiping the moisture from his brow, "Well, then," said he, "what must we do?"

"Sire, have you one regiment in the whole army in which you can confide?"

"De Winter," said the king; "have you confidence in the fidelity of yours?"

"Sire, they are but men; and men have either become very

feeble, or very wicked. I think that they may be faithful, but I cannot answer for them. I would entrust them with my own life, but should hesitate to entrust than with that of your majesty."

"Well, then," said Athos, "for want of a regiment, we—three devoted men—we must suffice. Your majesty must mount your horse, and place yourself in the midst of us. We will cross the Tyne, and gain Scotland, where we shall be safe."

"And is that also your advice, de Winter?" demanded the king.

"Yes, sire."

"And is it yours, M. d'Herblay?"

"Yes, sire."

"Well, then, let it be as you wish. De Winter, give the orders."

De Winter left the tent; and in the meantime the king finished dressing. The first beams of day began to penetrate the tent when de Winter returned.

"Everything is ready, sire," said he.

"And for us?" demanded Athos.

"Grimaud and Blaisois are holding your horses, ready saddled."

"In that case," said Athos, "let us not lose one moment, but depart."

"Yes, let us depart," said the king.

"Sire," said Aramis, "will not your majesty inform your friends?"

"My friends!" exclaimed Charles: "I have no longer any but you three—one, a friend of twenty years' standing, who has never forgotten me—two, friends of eight days' standing, whom I shall never forget. Come, gentlemen, come!"

The king left the tent, and found his horse ready. It was a dun charger, which he had ridden for three years, and to which he was very much attached. The horse, on seeing him, neighed with delight.

"Ah!" said the king, "I was unjust: here, if not a friend, is at any rate a creature that loves me. Thou wilt be faithful to me, wilt thou not, Arthus?"

And, as if he had understood these words, the horse rubbed his nose against the king, lifting up his lips with pleasure, and displaying his white teeth.

"Yes, yes," said the king, patting him—"yes, Arthus, I am satisfied with thee."

And with that agility which made the king one of the best horsemen in Europe, Charles leaped into his saddle, and turning towards Athos, Aramis, and de Winter, "Well, gentlemen," said he, "I am ready for you."

But Athos stood motionless, with his eyes fixed, and his hand stretched towards a dark line that followed the course of the Tyne, and extended itself far beyond the extremities of the camp.

"What is that line?" said Athos, which the last shades of night, contending with the first rays of morning, did not yet permit him clearly to distinguish: "what is that line? I did not see it yesterday."

"It is doubtless the mist, that rises from the river," said the king.

"Sire, it is something more compact than a vapour."

"In fact," said de Winter, "I can perceive something like a reddish-coloured rampart."

"It is the enemy, who is coming out of Newcastle, and is surrounding us," said Athos.

"The enemy!" exclaimed the king.

"Yes, the enemy. It is too late. Look—there, under that ray of the sun, on the side of the town, you may see the glitter of the Ironsides."

For that was the name that had been given to Cromwell's cuirassiers of the guard.

"Ah!" said the king, "we will soon know whether the Scots have betrayed us."

"What are you going to do, sire?" said Athos.

"To command them to charge, and to annihilate these wretched rebels." And the king, spurring his horse, rushed towards the Earl of Leven's tent.

"Let us follow him," said Athos.

Come along!" said Aramis.

"Is the king wounded?" said de Winter: "I perceive spots of blood on the ground." And he was hastening after the two friends, when Athos stopped him.

"Go and muster your regiment," said he; "I fear that we shall soon require it."

De Winter turned his horse, and the two friends continued their course. In a few moments the king had reached the tent of the commander of the Scottish army. He leaped from his horse, and entered the tent. The general was surrounded by his principal officers.

"The king!" they exclaimed, rising, and looking at each other in utter stupefaction.

Charles stood before them, with his hat on his head, a frowning brow, and rapping his boot with his riding-whip.

"Yes, gentlemen" he said, "the king in person—the king—who comes to demand of you an account of what is going forward?"

"What is the matter then, sire?" demanded the Earl of Leven.

"The matter is, sir," replied the king, giving way to a burst of passion, "that Cromwell reached Newcastle last night, and that you, knowing this, have not informed me—it is, that the enemy is just leaving the town, and bars our passage to the Tyne—that your sentinels have seen this movement, and have not apprised me of it—it is, that, by an infamous treaty, you have sold me to the parliament for two hundred thousand pounds. Of this, at any rate, I have been informed. This, then, is the matter, gentlemen! Therefore answer, and exculpate yourselves; for I accuse you of it!"

"Sire," stammered out Lord Leven, "your majesty must have been deceived by some false report."

"I have with my own eyes seen the enemy's army extending itself betwen me and Scotland," said Charles; "and I may almost say, that I myself heard the particulars of the bargain discussed."

The Scottish officers looked at each other with a frown.

"Sire," murmured the Earl of Leven, shrinking under the weight of his shame—"sire, we are willing to afford you every proof of our devotion."

"I only demand one," said the king: "place the army in battle array, and march against the enemy."

"That is impossible, sire," replied the earl.

"How! Impossible! And what can prevent it?" demanded Charles.

"Your majesty is well aware that there is a truce between us and the English army," replied the earl.

"If there be a truce, the English army has broken it, by issuing from the city contrary to the conventions, which required that they should remain shut up in it. Now I tell you, that you must pass through this army with me, and return to Scotland. Should you not do this, well, then, choose between the two names that hold up men to the greatest contempt and execration of their fellows: you are either cowards, or you are traitors."

The eyes of the Scots flashed fire, and, as often happens on similar occasions, they passed from the extreme of shame, to that of audacity. Two chieftains of the clans advanced, one on each side of the king.

"Well, then," they said, "we *have* promised to deliver England and Scotland from him, who for five-and-twenty years, has been consuming their blood and their gold. We *have* promised it, and we shall keep our promise. King Charles Stuart, you are our prisoner!"

And they put forth their hands to seize the king; but before they could touch his person, they both fell, the one insensible, and the other dead.

Athos had knocked down one with the butt-end of his pistol, and Aramis had passed his sword through the body of the other.

Then, whilst the Earl of Leven and the other chieftains started back in surprise and consternation at this unexpected assistance, which appeared to have fallen from heaven, Athos and Aramis drew the king from the tent, into which he had so rashly ventured, and leaping upon their horses, which the lacqueys held ready, all of them galloped towards the royal tent.

On passing, they perceived de Winter bring up his regiment; and the king made him a sign to accompany them.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE AVENGER.

All four entered the tent. They had no plan arranged, and it was necessary to settle one.

The king sank upon a chair. "I am lost!" he exclaimed.

"No, sire," replied Athos—"you are only betrayed."

The king heaved a deep sigh. "Betrayed by the Scots, amongst whom I was born, and whom I have always preferred to the English! Oh, the miscreants!"

"Sire," said Athos, "this is not the time for recriminations, but the moment when you should prove that you are a king and a gentleman. Rise up, sire, rise up! for you have here three men, who, you may be sure, will never betray you. Ah, if we were only five!" murmured Athos, thinking of d'Artagnan and Porthos.

"What do you say?" demanded Charles, starting up.

"I say, sire, that there is only one method. Lord de Winter answers for his regiment, or nearly so—let us not cavil about words. He will put himself at the head of his men; we will place ourselves by your majesty's side, cut our way through Cromwell's army, and gain Scotland."

"There is also another plan," said Aramis, "which is, for one of us to assume the dress, and mount the horse of his majesty. Thus, whilst they are eagerly pursuing him, the king may perhaps escape."

"The advice is good," said Athos, "and if his majesty will do one of us that honour, we shall be very grateful to him."

"What do you think of this advice, de Winter?" said the king, looking with admiration at the two men, whose only anxiety appeared to be to accumulate on their own heads the dangers that menaced him.

"I think, sire, that if there is any plan that can save your majesty, M. d'Herblay has just proposed it. I therefore humbly

entreat your majesty to make your choice quickly, for we have no time to lose."

"But, if I agree to it, it is certain death, or at the least imprisonment, to him who shall take my place."

"It is the honour of having saved his king," said de Winter.

The king looked at his old friend with tears in his eyes, took off the cordon of the Holy Ghost, which he wore out of compliment to the two Frenchmen who accompanied him, and threw it over the neck of de Winter, who received, kneeling, this terrible proof of his sovereign's friendship and confidence.

"It is quite just," said Athos: "he has served him longer than we have."

The king heard these words, and turned, with tears in his eyes. "Gentlemen," said he, "wait one moment: I have also a cordon to give to each of you." And going to a chest, in which his own peculiar orders were placed, he took from it two cordons of the garter.

"These orders cannot be for us," said Athos.

"And why not, sir?" demanded Charles.

"These orders are almost regal, and we are but simple gentlemen."

"Permit all the thrones of the earth to pass before your eyes," said the king, "and find me nobler hearts than your own. No, no, you do not do yourselves justice, gentlemen; therefore am I here to do it for you. Kneel down, count."

The count knelt, and the king passed the cordon over his shoulder from left to right, as was usual; then raising his sword, instead of the customary formula—"I dub you a knight; be brave, faithful, and loyal;" he said—"You are brave, faithful, and loyal: I dub you a knight, count."

Then turning towards Aramis: "It is now your turn, chevalier," said he.

And the same ceremony was repeated, whilst de Winter took off his brass cuirass, that he might more closely resemble the king.

Then, when Charles had finished with Aramis, as he had done with Athos, he embraced them both.

"Sire," said de Winter, who, that he was now exhibiting this vast proof of his devotion, had resumed all his energy and courage, "we are ready."

The king looked at the three gentlemen. "Then we must fly?" said he.

"To fly through an army, sire," said Athos, "is called charging, in every country of the world."

"Then I shall die sword in hand," said Charles. "Count, chevalier, should I ever again be king—"

"Sire, you have already honoured us more than, as simple gentlemen, we had a right to expect: therefore the gratitude is due from us. But let us not lose time, for we have already wasted too much."

The king for a last time held out his hand to them, exchanged hats with de Winter, and left the tent.

De Winter's regiment was drawn up on an elevated spot that commanded the camp. The king, followed by his three friends, went towards the regiment.

The Scottish camp appeared to be at last roused; the men left their tents, and had taken their place in order of battle.

"Do you see?" said the king: "perhaps they repent, and are ready to march."

"If they repent, sire," said Athos, "they will follow us."

"Good!" said the king. "What shall we do?"

"Let us reconnoitre the enemy," said Athos.

The eyes of the little group were then fixed on that dark line, which, at dawn of day, they had taken for a mist, and which the first beams of the sun had proved to be an army drawn up in battle array. The air was pure and clear, as it generally is at that early hour. The regiments, with their standards, and even the colours of the uniforms and horses, were now plainly perceptible. On an eminence, a little in advance of the enemy's position, they beheld a short, thick-set, and heavy-looking man make his appearance. He was surrounded by several officers, and directed a telescope towards the group in which the king was standing.

"Does that man know your majesty personally?" said Aramis.

Charles smiled. "That is Cromwell," said he.

"Then pull your hat over your eyes, sire, that he may not discover the substitution."

"Ah!" said Athos, "we have lost a great deal of time."

"Then give the command," said the king, "and let us go."

"Will you give it, sire, ?" demanded Athos."

"No, I name you my lieutenant-general," replied the king.

"Listen, then, Lord de Winter," said Athos. "Retire a little, I beseech you, sire: what we are going to say does not concern your majesty."

The king stepped a few paces back, with a smile on his countenance.

"My proposition is this," continued Athos:—"you shall divide your regiment into two squadrons: put yourself at the head of one; and we, with his majesty, will lead the other. Should nothing arise to obstruct our passage, we will charge in one body, force the enemy's line, and throw ourselves into the Tyne, which we must pass, either by a ford or by swimming. But if, on the contrary, we meet with any obstruction, you and your men must sacrifice yourselves, even to the last man, whilst we and the king continue our course. Having once reached the banks of the river, if your squadron does its duty, we shall force our way through, even should the enemy be drawn up three ranks deep."

"To horse!" said de Winter.

"To horse!" repeated Athos: "everything is arranged."

Then, gentlemen," said the king, "forward! and let our rallying cry be that of France—'Montjoie and St. Denis!' for the battle-cry of England is now in the mouths of traitors."

They mounted their horses, the king that of de Winter, and de Winter that of the king. Then de Winter put himself at the head of the first squadron; and the king, with Athos on his right and Aramis on his left, at the head of the second.

The whole Scottish army observed these preparations with the immobility and silence of shame. Some chieftains were seen to leave the ranks and break their swords.

"Ah!" cried the king, "this is some comfort to me—they are not all traitors!"

At this moment Lord de Winter's voice was heard "Forward!" he cried.

The first squadron moved on; the second followed it, and descended from the elevated ground. A regiment of cuirassiers, of about equal strength, now made its appearance from behind the hill, and came full speed to meet them.

The king pointed out to Athos and Aramis what was going on.

"Sire," said Athos, "the case is provided for; and if de Winter's men do their duty, this event will save, instead of destroy us."

At this moment de Winter's voice was heard above all the surrounding tumult, exclaiming, "Sword in hand!"

At this command every sword instantly leapt from its scabbard.

"Come, gentlemen," cried the king, excited by the sound and sight—"come, gentlemen, sword in hand!"

But this command, and the example set by the king, was obeyed by Athos and Aramis alone.

"We are betrayed," said the king, in a low voice.—

"Wait a moment," said Athos: "perhaps they may not have recognised your majesty's voice, and are waiting for the orders of their own commander."

"Did they not hear that of their colonel? But see! see!" exclaimed the king, stopping his horse with a sudden jerk, that brought him on his haunches, and seizing hold of the bridle of Athos's horse.

"Ah! cowards, wretches, traitors!" cried de Winter, whose voice they now heard, whilst his men, quitting their ranks, scattered themselves over the plain.

About a score of men formed themselves into a group around him, and awaited the charge of Cromwell's cuirassiers.

"Come, let us die with them!" exclaimed the king.

"Come, let us die!" responded Athos and Aramis.

"Rally round me, ye faithful hearts!" cried de Winter.

This cry reached the two friends, who went off at a gallop

"No quarter!" cried a voice, in French, in answer to that of de Winter—a voice that made them start.

As for de Winter, at the sound of that voice he became pale and almost petrified. It was the voice of a cavalier, who, mounted on a superb black horse, charged at the head of an English regiment, which, in his ardour, he preceded by ten paces.

"It is he!" murmured de Winter, with his eyes fixed, and letting his sword drop by his side.

"The king! the king!" shouted many voices, deceived by the blue riband and dun horse of de Winter: "take him alive!"

"No, it is not the king!" exclaimed the cavalier: "do not deceive yourselves. You are not the king, are you, Lord de Winter? Are you not my uncle?"

And at the same moment Mordaunt, for it was he, directed a pistol towards de Winter. The shot was fired, the ball passed through the breast of the aged gentleman, who made a single bound in his saddle, and then fell back into the arms of Athos, murmuring —"The avenger!"

"Remember my mother!" shouted Mordaunt, as he passed, carried forward by the impetuous fury of his horse.

An entire regiment now attacked the few men who had kept their ground, and the two Frenchmen were surrounded. Athos, being assured that de Winter was dead, let fall the body, and drew his sword.

"Come, Aramis," said he, "for the honour of France!" And the two Englishmen who happened to be nearest to them, fell mortally wounded.

At the same moment a terrible clamour was heard, and thirty swords gleamed around their heads. Suddenly a man rushed from the midst of the English ranks, overthrowing everything in his way, and leaping upon Athos he encircled him in his nervous arms, at the same time snatching his sword from his hand, and whispering in his ear—"Be silent!—surrender! To yield to me, is not to yield."

A giant had also seized Aramis by the wrists, and he vainly struggled to free himself from this formidable restraint.

"Surrender!" he said, looking earnestly at him.

Aramis raised his head. Athos turned.

"D'Art——," Athos was crying out, when the Gascon closed his mouth with his hand.

"I surrender," said Aramis, delivering up his sword to Porthos.

"Fire! Fire!" exclaimed Mordaunt, returning to the group in which were the two friends.

"And wherefore fire?" said the colonel: "all have surrendered."

"It is her ladyship's son!" said Athos to d'Artagnan.

"I have discovered him."

"It is the monk!" said Porthos to Aramis.

"I know it."

In the meantime the ranks began to open. D'Artagnan held the bridle of Athos's horse, and Porthos that of Aramis. Each endeavoured to withdraw his prisoner from the field of battle.

This movement disclosed the spot where de Winter had fallen. With the instinct of hatred, Mordaunt had discovered it, and, stooping down from his horse, was regarding it with a hideous smile.

Athos, calm as he was, put his hand to his holsters, still garnished with pistols.

"What are you doing?" said d'Artagnan.

"Let me kill him!"

"Not even a gesture to betray that you know him, or we are all four lost."

Then turning towards the young man: "A good capture," he cried out—"a good capture, friend Mordaunt. We have each made one—M. du Vallon and myself—nothing less than knights of the garter."

"But," said Mordaunt, looking at Athos and Aramis with his blood-shot eyes—"but these are Frenchmen, I believe."

"Faith, I know nothing about that. Are you a Frenchman, sir?" he said to Athos.

"I am, sir," he gravely replied.

"Then, my dear sir, you are prisoner to a countryman."

"But the king?" said Athos, with great anguish.

D'Artagnan squeezed his prisoner's hand, and said, "As for the king, we have got him."

"Yes," said Aramis, "by infamous treachery."

Porthos almost crushed his friend's hand, and said to him with a smile, "Ah, sir, war is carried on as much by address as by force. Look there!"

In fact, the squadron that ought to have protected Charles's retreat, was now seen advancing towards an English regiment, surrounding the king, who was walking alone, in a large open space. The prince was apparently calm; but what he must have suffered to appear calm, was plainly perceptible. The perspiration was dropping from his forehead, and he was continually wiping his temples and his lips with a handkerchief, which, every time that it was withdrawn from his mouth, was tinged with blood.

"There, look at Nebuchadnezzar!" exclaimed one of Cromwell's soldiers, an old Puritan, whose eyes flashed on beholding him whom they called the tyrant.

"Whom do you call Nebuchadnezzar?" said Mordaunt, with a fearful smile. "No, it is King Charles—the good King Charles—who robs his subjects that he may enjoy their property!"

Charles turned his eyes towards the insolent personage who thus spoke, but he did not know him. And yet the calm and resigned majesty of that countenance abashed Mordaunt's proud look.

"Gentlemen," said the king, seeing that Athos and Aramis were prisoners, "the day has been unfavourable; but it is not your fault, thank God! Where is my old friend, de Winter?"

The two gentlemen turned away their heads, and remained silent.

"Ask, where is Strafford?" said the harsh voice of Mordaunt.

Charles started. The demon had struck home: Strafford was his perpetual remorse, the shadow of his days, the phantom of his nights. The king looked around him, and saw a dead body extended at his feet. It was that of de Winter. Charles did not utter a cry or shed a tear, he only became more deadly pale Placing one knee on the ground, he raised de Winter's head, pressed his lips to his brow, and taking the riband of the Holy Ghost from his neck, placed it solemnly in his own bosom.

"De Winter is slain, then?" demanded d'Artagnan, fixing his eyes on the dead body.

"Yes," said Athos; "and by his nephew!"

"Well, there is the first of us gone," muttered d'Artagnan. "May he sleep in peace, for he was a brave man."

"Charles Stuart," said the English colonel, advancing towards the king, who had just resumed the insignia of royalty, "do you yield yourself my prisoner?"

"Colonel Tomlinson," answered Charles, "the king does not surrender: the man yields to force—that is all."

"Your sword!"

The king drew his sword, and broke it on his knee.

At this moment, a horse without a rider, and dripping with sweat and foam, with eyes of fire, and inflated nostrils, galloped up, and recognising his master, stopped close to him, and neighed with joy: it was Arthus. The king smiled, patted him, and lightly vaulted into the saddle.

"Now, gentlemen," said he, "lead me where you please." Then turning quickly: "Wait," said he; "I fancy that I saw de Winter move. Should he yet live, I charge you, by all that you hold most sacred, not to abandon that noble gentleman."

"Oh, make yourself perfectly easy, King Charles," said Mordaunt; "the ball passed through his heart!"

"Do not breathe a syllable, do not make a single motion, do not hazard a look towards me or Porthos," said d'Artagnan, to Athos and Aramis; "for her ladyship is not dead—her soul still lives in the body of that demon!"

The detachment proceeded towards the town, carrying with them the royal captive; but when they had traversed half the distance one of Cromwell's aides-de-camp brought an order to Colonel Tomlinson to conduct the king to Holdenby Castle.

At the same time, couriers were despatched in all directions, to announce to England, and to Europe, that Charles Stuart was the prisoner of Oliver Cromwell.

The Scots observed all this with their muskets at their feet, and their claymores in their scabbards.

CHAPTER XIV.

OLIVER CROMWELL.

"Are you not going to visit the general?" said Mordaunt to d'Artagnan and Porthos: "you know that he commanded you to do so after the action."

"We must first dispose of our prisoners in a place of security," replied d'Artagnan. "Do you know that these gentlemen are worth fifteen hundred pistoles each?"

"Oh, make yourself quite easy on that score," said Mordaunt, looking at them with an eye, from which he vainly endeavoured to discard its ferocity: "my troopers will guard them well. I will be responsible to you for them."

"I shall guard them better myself," answered d'Artagnan. "Besides, what do we require? Merely a good chamber with some sentinels; or even their parole that they will not endeavour to escape. I will go and arrange all this; and then we will have the honour of presenting ourselves before the general, and learn his commands to his eminence."

"You think, then, of shortly returning?" demanded Mordaunt.

"Our mission is completed, and nothing retains us any longer in England, except the will of the great man to whom we were sent."

Mordaunt bit his lips; and leaning down to the sergeant's ear—"You will follow these men," said he; "you will not lose sight of them; and when you know where they are lodged, you will come and wait for me at the gate of the town."

The sergeant made a sign that he should be obeyed.

Then, instead of following the body of prisoners, whom they were taking into the town, Mordaunt went towards the little hill, from which Cromwell had overlooked the battle, and where he had caused his tent to be pitched.

Cromwell had forbidden any one to be admitted to his presence; but the sentinel, who knew Mordaunt as one of the most intimate

confidants of his general, thought that the prohibition did not refer to the young man. Mordaunt therefore lifted the canvass of the tent, and saw Cromwell seated at a table, with his face covered by his hands, and his back turned towards him. Whether he heard Mordaunt's entrance or not, Cromwell did not notice his presence. Mordaunt therefore remained standing in the doorway.

Soon afterwards, however, Cromwell raised his heavy brow, and, as if he had instinctively felt that some one was there he slowly turned his head.

"I said that I wished to be alone!" he exclaimed, on seeing the young man.

"That prohibition was not supposed to refer to me, sir," said Mordaunt. "Nevertheless, if you command, I am ready to depart."

"Ah! is it you, Mordaunt?" said Cromwell, clearing away, as if by an effort of his strong will, the veil that covered his eyes: "well, since you are here, you may remain."

"I offer you my congratulations."

"Your congratulations! And for what?"

"For the capture of Charles Stuart. You are now the master of England."

"I was much more so two hours ago," said Cromwell.

"How is that, general?"

"England wished me to capture the tyrant—the tyrant is now taken. Have you seen him?"

"Yes, sir," replied Mordaunt.

"And how did he comport himself?"

Mordaunt hesitated; but the truth appeared to force itself from his lips involuntarily.—"Calm and dignified."

"What did he say?"

"Some words of farewell to his friends."

"To his friends!" murmured Cromwell: "he has friends, then. Did he defend himself?"

"No, sir, he was abandoned by all, except three or four men; he had, consequently, no means of resistance."

"To whom did he give up his sword?"

"He did not deliver it up—he broke it."

"He did well. But he would have done even better, if instead of breaking it, he had used it with greater skill."

There was a moment's silence.

"The colonel of the regiment that escorted the king was slain, I believe?" said Cromwell, fixing his eye earnestly on Mordaunt.

"Yes, sir."

"By whom?" inquired Cromwell.

"By me."

"And what was his name?"

"Lord de Winter.

"Your uncle!" exclaimed Cromwell.

"My uncle?" replied Mordaunt: "traitors to England do not belong to my family."

Cromwell remained thoughtful for an instant, looking on the young man. Then, with that deep melancholy which Shakespeare paints so well—"Mordaunt," said he, "you are a fearful follower."

"When the Lord commands," replied Mordaunt, "there is no disputing His orders. Abraham raised the knife against Isaac, and Isaac was his son."

"Yes," said Cromwell, "but the Lord did not allow the sacrifice to be completed."

"I looked around me," rejoined Mordaunt, "and I saw neither goat nor kid caught in the thickets of the plain."

Cromwell bowed his head. "You are strong amongst the strong, Mordaunt," said he. "How did the Frenchmen behave themselves?"

"Like brave men, sir, replied Mordaunt.

"Yes, yes," said Cromwell, "the French fight well, and I am not mistaken. I saw, through my telescope, that they were in the foremost rank."

"They were there," said Mordaunt.

"After you, however," said Cromwell.

"It was not their fault, but that of their horses."

There was again a moment's silence.

"And the Scots?" said Cromwell.

"They kept their word, and did not move a step."

"The wretches!" murmured Cromwell.

"Their officers demand an interview."

"I have no leisure. Have they been paid?"

"Yes, this very night."

"Let them go, then—let them return to their mountains—let them there hide their shame, if their mountains are lofty enough for that! I have nothing more to do with them, nor they with me! Now you may retire, Mordaunt."

"Before I go," said Mordaunt, "I have one or two questions to ask you, and a request to make, sir."

"To me?"

Mordaunt bowed. "I come to you—my hero, my protector, my father—and I say, 'master, are you satisfied with me?'"

Cromwell looked at him with astonishment. The young man remained unmoved.

"Yes," said Cromwell. "Since I have known you, you have done, not only your duty, but even more than your duty: you have been a faithful friend, a skilful negotiator, and a good soldier."

"Do you remember, sir, that I was the first person who suggested the idea of treating with the Scots to abandon their king?"

"Yes, the thought originated with you, it is true. I had not yet carried my estimate of the degradation of human nature so far.'

"Was I a good ambassador in France?"

"Yes, and you obtained what I wanted from Mazarin.'

"Have I always striven earnestly for your glory and interest?"

"Too ardently, perhaps: that is what I reproached you for just now. But what is your object in all these questions?"

"It is, my lord, that the moment is now arrived, when one word from you can recompense me for all these services."

"Ah!" said Cromwell, with a slight movement of contempt; "it is true, I forgot that every service deserved its reward—that you have served me, and that you have not been recompensed."

"Sir, I can be so instantly, and far beyond my expectations."

"How is that?"

"I have the reward within my reach, and almost grasp it."

"And what is this reward?" demanded Cromwell. 'Has gold

been offered to you? Do you demand rank? Do you desire a command?"

"Sir, will you grant my request?"

"Let me first hear what it is."

"Sir, when you have said to me—'go and execute an order'—have I ever inquired 'what is that order?'"

"But should your request be impossible to grant?"

"Whenever you desired anything to be done, and charged me with the execution of it, have I ever answered—'it is impossible?'"

"But a demand, preceded by so much preparation—"

"Ah! make yourself quite easy, sir," said Mordaunt, with a gloomy expression: "it will not ruin you."

"Well, then," said Cromwell, "I promise to grant your request, in so far as it lies in my power. Now make it."

"Sir," said Mordaunt, "two prisoners were taken this morning. I demand them of you?"

Have they, then, offered a considerable ransom?" demanded Cromwell.

"On the contrary, I believe that they are poor."

"They are your friends, then?"

"Yes, sir, they are my friends," cried Mordaunt, "my dear friends, and I would give my life for theirs."

"Well," said Cromwell, resuming, with a certain emotion of pleasure, a better opinion of the young man—"well, Mordaunt, I give them to you. I do not wish to know who they are. Do what you like with them."

"Thank you, sir," exclaimed Mordaunt, "thank you! My life is henceforth yours; and, even in losing it, I should still be your debtor. Thank you! You have amply rewarded my services!"

And throwing himself on his knees before Cromwell, in spite of the efforts of the Puritan general, who did not wish, or pretended not to wish, to receive this almost regal homage, he took his hand, which he kissed.

"What!" said Cromwell, stopping him as he rose up—"No other recompense? No gold? No rank?"

"You have given me all you could give me, my lord, and from

this day I consider you discharged from all further obligation." And Mordaunt rushed out of the tent, with a joy that overflowed from his heart and his eyes.

Cromwell looked after him. "He slew his uncle!" he murmured. "Alas! what followers are mine! Perhaps this man, who claims nothing from me, or appears to do so, may have demanded more of me, in the sight of God, than those who ask me for gold, governments, and the bread of the poor. No one serves me for nothing. Charles, who is my prisoner, has perhaps yet some friends, and I have not one!"

And with a deep sigh he resumed his reverie, which had been interrupted by Mordaunt.

CHAPTER XV.

THE GENTLEMEN.

Whilst Mordaunt was proceeding towards Cromwell's tent, d'Artagnan and Porthos led their prisoners to the house that had been assigned them for a lodging at Newcastle.

The order given to the sergeant by Mordaunt, had not escaped the Gascon's observation. He had, therefore, by a glance from his eye, recommended the strictest caution to Athos and Aramis. They had, consequently, walked in silence by the side of their conquerors; but this silence was not unpleasing, each being sufficiently occupied with his own thoughts.

If ever a man was astonished, it was Mousqueton, when he beheld the four friends advancing, followed by the sergeant and about a dozen men. He rubbed his eyes, not being able to persuade himself that Athos and Aramis were really there; but at last he was compelled to believe their evidence, and was just on the point of breaking out into exclamations, when Porthos imposed silence on him by one of those glances that cannot be misunderstood. Mousqueton therefore remained standing against the door-post,

awaiting the explanation of such a strange circumstance; and what more than all perplexed him, was, that the four friends appeared as if they no longer knew each other.

The house to which d'Artagnan and Porthos conducted their friends, was that which they had inhabited the evening before, and which had been assigned to them by Cromwell. It was the corner house of the street, with a garden and stables facing the adjoining street. The windows of the ground-floor, as was then often the case in provincial towns, were grated, so that they much resembled those of a prison.

The two friends, having made their prisoners enter, remained at the door themselves, and Mousqueton conducted the four horses to the stables.

"Why do not we go in with them?" inquired Porthos.

"Because it is necessary, first, to ascertain what this sergeant and his eight or ten men are about to do."

The sergeant and his men were establishing themselves in the garden. D'Artagnan inquired why they stationed themselves there.

"We have received orders," replied the sergeant, "to assist you in guarding your prisoners."

There was nothing objectionable in this. It was, in fact, a delicate attention, for which they ought to appear grateful. D'Artagnan thanked the sergeant, and gave him a crown, to drink Cromwell's health. The sergeant informed him that the Puritans did not drink; but he put the money into his pocket.

"Ah!" said Porthos, "what a frightful day, my dear d'Artagnan."

"What are you saying, Porthos! Do you call that a frightful day, in which we have found our friends again?"

"Yes, but under what circumstances!"

"It is true, the conjuncture is rather embarrassing," said d'Artagnan. "But never mind; let us go to them, and endeavour to obtain a distinct view of our position.

"It is sadly perplexed," said Porthos; "and I now understand why Aramis recommended me to strangle this horrible Mordaunt."

"Silence, then!" said d'Artagnan: "do not utter that name."

"But," said Porthos, "I talk French, and they are Englishmen."

D'Artagnan gazed at Porthos with that expression of astonishment, which a rational man cannot withhold from eccentricities of every kind. Then, as Porthos kept looking a him, without in the slightest degree comprehending the cause of his surprise, d'Artagnan gave him a push, saying, "There—go in!"

Porthos entered first; d'Artagnan followed him; and having carefully closed the door, he folded his friends successively in his arms.

Athos was quite overpowered with melancholy; Aramis looked from Porthos to d'Artagnan, without saying a word, but his looks were so expressive that d'Artagnan understood them.

"You wish to know how it happens that we are here? Ah, by Jove! it is easy enough to guess. Mazarin sent us with a letter to Oliver Cromwell."

"But how is it that we find you by Mordaunt's side?" said Athos; "that Mordaunt whom I told you to distrust, d'Artagnan."

"And whom I advised you to strangle, Porthos," added Aramis.

"Still Mazarin. Cromwell sent him to Mazarin—Mazarin sent us to Cromwell. There is a fatality in all this!"

"Yes, you are right, d'Artagnan—a fatality which dissevers and destroys us; so that, my dear Aramis, let us say no more about it, but prepare to submit to our lot."

Zounds! let us, on the contrary, say a great deal about it," said d'Artagnan; "for it has been agreed upon, once for all, that we are for ever united, although we may support opposite causes."

"Oh, yes, opposite indeed!" said Athos, smiling. "And here I ask you, what cause is it that you support? Ah, d'Artagnan! see on what service that wretch Mazarin employs you. Do you know the crime of which you have this day been guilty? Of the capture of the king, of his ignominy, of his death!"

"You exaggerate, Athos," replied d'Artagnan: "we have not yet come to that."

"Ah, my God! but we are approaching it. Why do they arrest a king? When they wish to respect him as a master, they do not purchase him like a slave. Do you believe that it is to replace him

on his throne, that Cromwell has paid two hundred thousand pounds for him? My friends, rest assured that they will murder him, and that is the least crime they can commit. It is better to cut off his head, than to strike a king."

"I do not contradict you, and after all; it may be possible," said d'Artagnan. "But what is all this to us? As for me, I am here, because I am a soldier, and because I serve my masters; that, is to say, those from whom I receive my pay. I took an oath of obedience, and I obey; but you, who have taken no oaths—why are you here, and what cause do you support?"

"The most sacred cause in the world," said Athos, "that of misfortune, of royalty, of religion. A friend, a wife, a daughter, did us the honour to call us to their assistance. We served them to the utmost of our feeble means, and God will consider the will for the power. You may think differently, d'Artagnan; you may see things under a different aspect, my friend. I do not attempt to influence you, but yet I blame you."

"Oh, oh!" said d'Artagnan; "and after all, what does it signify to me that M. Cromwell, who is an Englishman, has rebelled against his king, who is a Scotsman? I am a Frenchman, and these things do not affect me: why then would you make me responsible for them?"

"Aye, why?" said Porthos.

"Because all gentlemen are brothers—because you are a gentleman—because the kings of all countries are the first of gentlemen—because the common people, blind, ungrateful, and besotted, always take a pleasure in degrading what is superior to them. And is it you, d'Artagnan—a man of the old noblesse, a man of an ancient name, a splendid swordsman, who should assist in delivering up a king to hucksters of beer, to tailors, and carmen? Ah, d'Artagnan! as a soldier, perhaps you have done your duty; but as a gentleman, you are culpable; and I tell you so."

"D'Artagnan, who was biting a flower-stalk, did not answer, but he felt himself very uncomfortable; more especially when as, he turned his face away from Athos's eye, he encountered that of Aramis.

"And you, Porthos," continued the count, as if he pitied d'Ar-

tagnan's confusion—"you, the bravest heart, the best friend, the most accomplished soldier that I know—you, whom your soul made worthy of being born on the steps of a throne, and who, sooner or later, will be rewarded by an intelligent sovereign—you, my dear Porthos—you, a gentleman by your manners, your tastes, and your courage—you are as culpable as d'Artagnan."

Porthos coloured, but more with pleasure than confusion; and yet he hung down his head as if he had been humbled.

"Yes, yes, I believe that you are right, my dear count."

Athos rose up. "Come," said he approaching d'Artagnan, and taking his hand, "do not pout, my dear son; for all that I have said to you has been uttered, if not with the voice, at any rate with the heart, of a father. It would, believe me, have been easier for me, to have thanked you for having saved my life, and not to have given you one word of my sentiments."

"Without doubt, Athos, without doubt," replied d'Artagnan, pressing his hand. "But then you have the devil's own sentiments and opinions, such as few can entertain. Who could ever imagine that any reasonable man would quit his home, his country, his ward—a splendid young fellow, for we saw him at the camp—to run, after what? Why to the assistance of a rotten and worm-eaten royalty, that, some fine morning, will crumble to pieces like an old barrack. Your sentiments are doubtless very fine—so fine, that they are superhuman."

"Whatever they may be, d'Artagnan," said Athos, (without falling into the trap that his friend, with his true Gascon address, had laid for him, by touching on his affection for Raoul,)—whatever they may be, you are convinced at heart that they are right. But I am wrong to argue with my master. D'Artagnan, I am your prisoner: treat me as such."

"Ah, by Jove!" cried d'Artagnan. "you know very well that you will not long be my prisoner."

"No," said Aramis; "for they will treat us as they did those at Philiphaugh."

"And how did they treat them?" demanded d'Artagnan.

"Why," said Aramis, "they hanged half, and shot half."

"Well, then, as for me," said d'Artagnan, "I promise you, that whilst a drop of blood remains in my veins, you will be neither hanged, nor shot. 'Odsounds! let them come. Besides, do you see that door, Athos?"

"Well, what then?"

"You may pass through that door whenever you please; for, from this moment, you and Aramis are free as air."

"There do I truly recognise you my brave d'Artagnan," said Athos; "but we are no longer in your power. That door is guarded, d'Artagnan. Are you not aware of it?"

"Well, then, you will force it," said Porthos. "What is it? Ten men, more or less."

"That would be nothing for all four," said Athos; "but it is too much for two of us. No, divided as we now are, we must perish. Mark the fatal example: on the Vendômois road, d'Artagnan, you, so brave, Porthos, you so valiant and so powerful, were beaten. To-day, Aramis and myself were also beaten: it was our turn. Now, that never happened to us when we four were united. Let us die, then, as de Winter died. As for me, I declare that I will never consent to fly, unless all four go together."

"Impossible!" said d'Artagnan: "we are under Mazarin's command."

"I know it, and do not further press you. My arguments have been of no avail; and doubtless they were futile, since they have had no effect upon minds so well constituted as yours."

"Besides, even had they succeeded," said Aramis, "it is much better not to compromise two such excellent friends as d'Artagnan and Porthos. Rely upon it, gentlemen, we shall not disgrace you by our deaths. As for me, I shall feel quite proud in confronting death with you, Athos, whether by the ball or the cord; for never have you appeared to me so truly great as on this day."

D'Artagnan said nothing; but, after having chewed his flower stalk, he began to gnaw his fingers.

"You fancy, then, that they are going to kill you?" he said, at length. "And why? Who has any interest in your death? Besides, you are our prisoners."

"Credulous, triply credulous!" said Aramis. Do not you then know Mordaunt? As for me, I have exchanged but one glance with him, and by that glance alone I saw that we were doomed."

"The fact is, I am monstrous sorry that I did not strangle him, as you told me, Aramis," said Porthos.

"Ah! I laugh at and despise that Mordaunt!" exclaimed d'Artagnan. "*Cap de Diou!* if he tickles me too much, I will crush the insect! Do not fly, then; it is perfectly unnecessary; for I swear that you are as safe here as you were twenty years ago, you, Athos, in the rue Feron, and you, Aramis, in the rue de Vaugirard."

"There," said Athos, stretching out his hand towards one of the grated windows that gave light to the apartment, "you will soon know what you have to do, for he is hastening here."

"Who?"

"Mordaunt."

In fact, on looking in the direction indicated by Athos, d'Artagnan saw a horseman approaching at a gallop. It was Mordaunt. D'Artagnan rushed out of the room. Porthos wished to follow him.

"Remain," said d'Artagnan, "and do not come out until I beat the drum with my fingers on the door."

CHAPTER XVI.

JESUS SEIGNEUR.

When Mordaunt came opposite the house, he saw d'Artagnan at the door, and the soldiers lying scattered about, with their arms on the grass.

"Halloo!" he cried, in a voice hoarse from the rapidity of his course, "are the prisoners still here?"

"Yes, sir," said the sergeant, rising quickly, as well as his men, who hastily put their hands to their hats.

"Very well; four men, immediately, to lead them to my quarters."

Four men instantly stepped forward.

"Your pleasure?" said d'Artagnan, in that bantering tone which our readers must have often observed in him, since they became acquainted with him. "May I be permitted to inquire what you want?"

"Sir," said Mordaunt, "I commanded four men to take the prisoners, whom we captured this morning, and to conduct them to my quarters."

"And why so?" demanded d'Artagnan. "Pardon my curiosity; but you can understand that I may wish to be edified on that subject."

"Because the prisoners now belong to me," replied Mordaunt haughtily; "and Ishall dispose of them according to my own fancy."

"Pardon me, pardon me, my young sir," said d'Artagnan: "it appears to me that you make a slight mistake. It is customary for prisoners to belong to those who have taken them—not to those who saw them taken. You might have taken Lord de Winter, who was your uncle, as I have been told; but you preferred killing him: that is all very well. M. du Vallon and myself might have killed these two gentlemen; but we preferred taking them. Every one has his own peculiar taste."

Mordaunt's lips turned pale.

D'Artagnan saw that matters would soon get worse, and began to drum a march on the door. At the first passage, Porthos came out, and placed himself on the other side of the door, his feet touching the threshold, and his head the top. This manœuvre did not escape Mordaunt's observation.

"Sir," said he, with a warmth that began to display itself, "resistance will be perfectly useless. These prisoners have just been given to me by the commander-in-chief, my illustrious patron, Oliver Cromwell."

These words came upon d'Artagnan like a thunderbolt. The blood mounted to his temples, and a mist passed before his eyes; he

thoroughly comprehended the savage hope of the young man, and his hand descended, as it were instinctively, to the pommel of his sword.

As for Porthos, he watched d'Artagnan's every motion, that he might regulate his own movements accordingly.

Porthos's looks disturbed more than they encouraged d'Artagnan, and he began to reproach himself for having called forth the brute force of Porthos, in an affair that appeared to him as if it ought to be entirely managed by stratagem.

"Violence," said he to himself, "will ruin us all. D'Artagnan, my friend, prove to this young viper, that you are not only stronger, but also more acute, than he is."

"Ah!" said he, making a low bow, "why did you not begin by telling me this, M. Mordaunt? What! you come from General Cromwell, the most illustrious captain of the age?"

"I have but just this instant left him, sir," said Mordaunt, dismounting, and giving his horse to one of the soldiers to hold; "I have only left him this very moment."

"Why did you not say so at once, my dear sir?" continued d'Artagnan: "all England belongs to M. Cromwell; and, since you come to demand my prisoners in his name, I bow to his decision. They are yours, sir—take them!"

Mordaunt came forward, radiant with joy; and Porthos, utterly annihilated, and looking at d'Artagnan with profound stupefaction, was opening his mouth to speak, when d'Artagnan stamped upon his foot, by which he discovered that his friend was only playing off some artifice.

Mordaunt had placed his foot upon the threshold, and, with his hat in hand, was just going to pass between the two friends, making a sign to his four men to follow him.

"But pardon me, sir," said d'Artagnan, with the sweetest smile, and laying his hand on the young man's shoulder; "if the illustrious General Cromwell has disposed of our prisoners in your favour, he has doubtless made you this gift in writing."

Mordaunt stoped short.

"He has doubtless furnished you with a letter for me—the least scrap of paper, in fact—that may certify that you come in his name.

Will you be so kind as to confide this letter to me, that I may at least have some excuse for this abandonment of my countrymen. Otherwise, do you see, although I am quite certain that General Cromwell can wish them no harm, it might have a bad appearance."

Mordaunt drew back, and feeling the blow, he launched a terrible glance at d'Artagnan; but he responded by the most amiable and friendly expression that ever adorned a countenance.

"When I make an assertion, sir," said Mordaunt, "do you insult me by doubting it?"

"I!" exclaimed d'Artagnan: "I doubt what you say! God forbid, my dear M. Mordaunt. On the contrary, I consider you a worthy and accomplished gentleman, according to all appearance; and besides, sir, do you wish me to speak frankly?" continued d'Artagnan, in his apparently open and unreserved manner.

"Speak, sir," said Mordaunt.

"M. du Vallon, who, by the way, is rich—he has forty thousand francs in rent, and, consequently, does not think of money—I do not speak, therefore, for him, but for myself."

"And what then, sir?"

"Well then, as for me, I am not rich. In Gascony, it is no disgrace, sir. No one is rich there. Henry IV., of glorious memory, who was the king of Gascony, as his majesty Philip IV. is the king of all Spain, had never a sous in his pocket."

"Conclude,' sir," said Mordaunt; "I see what you are coming to; and should it be what I conjecture that restrains you, the difficulty may be removed."

"Ah! I knew well enough," said d'Artagnan, "that you were a lad of talent. Well, then, here is the very fact: see where the shoe pinches, as we French say. I am an officer of fortune—nothing more. I have nothing but what I gain by my sword; that is to say, more blows than bank notes. Now on taking two Frenchmen this morning, who seem to me to be men of high birth, being knights of the garter, I said to myself, 'My fortune is made.' I say two, because, under similar circumstances, M. du Vallon, who is rich, does not give up his prisoners."

Mordaunt, completely deceived by d'Artagnan s verbose good-nature, smiled like a man who well understands the reasons that have been given to him, and replied gently, " I will get the order signed immediately, sir, and with it two thousand pistoles; but in the meantime, sir, allow me to take these men away."

" No," said d'Artagnan, " what signifies the delay of half an hour? I am a man of methodical habits; therefore, let us do the thing according to rule."

" And yet, sir," replied Mordaunt, " I could force you to comply; for I command here."

" Ah, sir," said d'Artagnan, smiling most agreeably, " it is plain enough, that, although we have had the honour of travelling in your company, you do not yet understand us. We are gentlemen, we are Frenchmen; we are able, we two alone, to kill you and your eight men. Ah! M. Mordaunt, do not be obstinate; for that will make me so also; and then I become absolutely immoveable. And there is also my friend, who is even more violent than myself; without considering that we are ambassadors from Cardinal Mazarin, who represents the King of France; consequently, we at this time represent both the king and the cardinal; so that, in our character as ambassadors, we are inviolable—a circumstance that M. Cromwell, as great a politician as he is a general, is just the man to understand. Ask him, therefore, for a written order. What can it signify to you, my dear M. Mordaunt?"

" Yes, a written order," said Porthos, who began to comprehend d'Artagnan's intention; " we only want that."

However much Mordaunt might have wished to have recourse to violence, he was just the man to estimate d'Artagnan's reasons. Besides, his own reputation imposed some restraint upon him; and what he had himself seen of d'Artagnan, coming in aid of his reputation, he paused. Moreover, being completely ignorant of the profound friendship that existed between the four Frenchmen, all his disquietude disappeared before the otherwise plausible motive of the ransom. He therefore resolved to go, not only for the order, but for the two thousand pistoles, at which he had himself valued the two prisoners.

Mordaunt therefore again mounted his horse, and, after having commanded the sergeant to keep a strict guard, he turned his horse's head and disappeared.

"Good!" said d'Artagnan; "a quarter of an hour to go to the tent, a quarter of an hour to return: it is more than we require."

Then, turning towards Porthos, without the slightest change of countenance, so that those who were watching him might fancy that he was merely continuing the conversation, "Friend Porthos," said he, looking him in the face, "attend carefully to what I say: first, not one single word to our friends of what you have just heard; it is quite unnecessary that they should know the service we have done them."

"Very well—I understand," said Porthos.

"Go to the stable, where you will find Mousqueton: you will order him to saddle our horses, and put our pistols into the holsters, and then you will lead them to the street down there, so that we may have nothing to do but to mount them. The other arrangements I will look to myself."

Porthos did not make the slightest remark, but obeyed with that sublime confidence he always reposed in his friend. He merely said, "Before I go, shall I step into the room where our friends are?"

"No, it is unnecessary."

"Well then, do me the kindness to get my purse, which I left on the mantelpiece."

"Very well."

Porthos proceeded towards the stable with his usual calm and tranquil step, passing through the soldiers, who could not help admiring his lofty figure and nervous limbs, although he was a Frenchman. At the corner of the street he met Mousqueton, whom he took back with him.

Then d'Artagnan went in, whistling an air which he had commenced on Porthos's departure.

"My dear Athos," said he, "I have been reflecting on your arguments, and they have convinced me. I am decidedly sorry

that I have had anything to do with this affair. You have said the truth—Mazarin is a low-bred fellow. I am, therefore, resolved to fly with you: no remarks; but hold yourself ready. Your swords are in that corner; do not forget them: they are instruments that may prove very useful under our present circumstances. And that, by the way, reminds me of Porthos's purse, Good! there it is."

And d'Artagnan put the purse into his pocket; whilst his two friends regarded him in utter stupefaction.

"Well, what is there so astonishing in this?" said he. "I was blind, and Athos has made me see clearly: that is all. Come here."

The two friends went up to him.

"Do you see that street?" said d'Artagnan. "Your horses are there: you will pass out of the door, then turn to the left, and leap into your saddles; and that is all. Do not trouble yourselves about anything except attending to the signal. That signal will be, when I shall cry out, 'Jesus Seigneur!'"

"But you—your word that you will come with us, d'Artagnan?" said Athos.

"I swear to you, by the great God—"

"It is settled," said Aramis. "When you exclaim, 'Jesus Seigneur!' we pass out, we upset everything we find opposing us, we run to our horses, leap into the saddlse, and spur forward. Is that it?"

"Exactly so."

"You know, Aramis," said Athos, "I always told you that d'Artagnan was the best of the party."

"Good!" said d'Artagnan. "But a truce to compliments. I escape. Adieu!"

"And you fly with us, will you not?"

"Undoubtedly. Do not forget the signal—Jesus Seigneur!"

And he went out in the same manner that he entered, resuming, at the very note where he had left off, the air that he was whistling at his entrance.

The soldiers were amusing themselves, or sleeping. Two were singing in a corner, the psalm, "By the waters of Babylon," horribly out of tune.

D'Artagnan called the sergeant.

"My dear sir," said he, "General Cromwell has sent for me by M. Mordaunt; therefore keep a good watch over the prisoners, I beseech you."

The sergeant indicated that he did not understand French; and d'Artagnan then endeavoured to explain by gestures, what he could not make him understand by words. The sergeant made a sign that all was right.

D'Artagnan proceeded to the stables, and found the five horses saddled, his own amongst the rest.

"Each of you take a horse by the bridle," said he to Porthos and Mousqueton; "turn to the left, so that Athos and Aramis may see you from their window."

"They are coming, then?" said Porthos

"In an instant."

"You did not forget my purse?"

"No; make yourself easy about that."

"Very well."

And Porthos and Mousqueton, each leading a horse, went to their post.

D'Artagnan, being now alone, struck a steel, and ignited a piece of tinder about twice the size of a bean; he then mounted his horse, and went and stopped him in the midst of the soldiers, opposite the door. There, leaning forward, and whilst patting his horse's neck, he gently introduced the lighted tinder into his ear. It was necessary to be as good a horseman as d'Artagnan, to run the hazard of such a scheme; for the animal no sooner began to feel the smart of the burning, than he uttered a scream of pain, then reared up, and gave a bound as if he had been seized with sudden madness.

The soldiers, whom he threatened with destruction, scampered off most precipitately.

"Help! help!" cried d'Artagnan. "Stop him! stop him! My horse has got the vertigo."

In fact, in one moment, the blood appeared as if it would start from his eyes, and he became white with foam.

"Help! help!" d'Artagnan continued to cry to the soldiers, who

dared not come near him: "Help! Are you going to let me be killed? Jesus Seigneur!"

Scarcely had d'Artagnan uttered this last cry, before the door opened, and Athos and Aramis rushed out, sword in hand. Thanks to d'Artagnan's stratagem, the road was clear.

"The prisoners are escaping! the prisoners are escaping!" exclaimed the sergeant.

"Stop them! stop them!" vociferated d'Artagnan, giving the rein to his furious horse, which rushed forward, overturning three or four of the men in his career.

"Stop! stop!" cried the soldiers, running to their arms.

But the prisoners were already in their saddles; and once there, they lost no time in galloping off towards the nearest gate. In the street they perceived Grimaud and Blaisois, who were coming to look for their masters. By a sign, Athos made Grimaud understand everything, and he instantly put himself on the track of the small troop, that appeared like a whirlwind, and which d'Artagnan, who brought up the rear, excited yet more by his voice. They passed through the gate like shadows, without the guards even thinking of stopping them, and found themselves in the open country.

In the meantime, the soldiers still kept crying out, "stop! stop!" And the sergeant, who began to discover that he was the dupe of a stratagem, was tearing his hair.

Whilst all this was going on, a cavalier was seen coming up at a gallop, holding a paper in his hand. It was Mordaunt, who returned with the order.

"The prisoners!" he exclaimed, whilst jumping from his horse.

The sergeant had not the power to answer him, but, with his mouth wide open, pointed to the empty room.

Mordaunt rushed towards the steps, comprehended all, uttered a cry as if something had torn his very entrails, and fell down insensible on the pavement.

CHAPTER XVII.

IN WHICH IT IS PROVED, THAT, IN THE MOST DIFFICULT SITUATIONS, GREAT HEARTS NEVER LOSE THEIR COURAGE, NOR GOOD STOMACHS THEIR APPETITES.

The little troop thus proceeded at a gallop, without exchanging one word, or casting a look behind them; fording a small stream, of which they did not know the name; and leaving on their left a town, which Athos pretended was Durham. At last they came in sight of a small wood, towards which they directed their course, giving their horses a final prick of the spur.

When they had disappeared behind a screen of verdure sufficient to conceal them from those who might pursue them, they stopped to hold a consultation. Their horses were entrusted to the two lacquays, that they might gain their breath, without being unbridled or unsaddled. Grimaud was placed as sentinel.

"In the first place, let me embrace you, d'Artagnan, my friend," said Athos—"you, our saviour—you, who are the only true hero amongst us."

"Athos is right, and I admire you," said Aramis, folding him in his arms. "Under an intelligent master, to what might you not aspire, with that infallible eye, an arm of steel, and a commanding intellect."

"Now," said the Gascon, "this is all very well, and I accept, for myself and Porthos, these embraces and thanks; but we must not lose time. Forward! forward."

The two friends, recalled by d'Artagnan to what they owed Porthos, pressed his hand in turn.

"Now," said Athos, "the main point is for us not to run about at hazard like fools, but to devise some plan. What are we going to do?"

"What are we going to do? Why, zounds! that is not difficult to tell."

"Tell it then, d'Artagnan."

"We must gain the first seaport, unite all our little resources, freight a vessel, and pass over to France. As for me, I will spend my last sou for it. The first treasure is life; and our,s it must be confessed, hangs upon a thread."

"What do you say to that, du Vallon?" inquired Athos.

"I?" said Porthos: "I am precisely of d'Artagnan opinion. This England is a villanous country."

"You are, then, quite decided upon leaving it?" demanded Athos of d'Artagnan.

"Zounds!" said d'Artagnan, "I do not see what should keep me in it."

Athos exchanged a look with Aramis. "Go, then, my friends," he said, with a sigh.

"How—go!" said d'Artagnan: "it appears to me that it is, let us go."

"No," replied Athos—"no, my friend, we must separate."

"Separate!" cried d'Artagnan, quite astounded by this unexpected declaration.

"Bah!" said Porthos, "why should we separate, now that we are together."

"Because your mission is accomplished, and you can return to France immediately, as, indeed, you ought to do; but ours is not finished."

"Your mission is not accomplished?" said d'Artagnan, looking at Athos with surprise.

"No, my friend," replied Athos, with his gentle but persuasive voice, so mild, and yet so firm: "we came here to defend King Charles: we have defended him badly; and it still remains for us to save him."

"Save the king!" said d'Artagnan, looking now at Aramis, as he had before looked at Athos.

Aramis contented himself with giving a nod of assent.

D'Artagnan's countenance assumed an expression of deep compassion: he began to imagine that he was engaged with two actual madmen.

"You cannot possibly be talking seriously, Athos," said d'Artag-

nan. "The king is in the midst of an army, which is taking him to London. That army is commanded by a butcher, or the son of a butcher, which is much the same thing—a Colonel Harrison. His majesty will be tried on his arrival in London: of that I am quite certain; for I heard quite enough from Cromwell's own lips to make me pretty sure on that point."

Athos and Aramis exchanged a second glance.

"And, when once tried, the sentence will not be delayed," continued d'Artagnan. "They are gentry who can move pretty quickly at a pinch, these Puritans."

"And to what punishment do you think the king will be condemned?" said Athos.

"To the punishment of death, I fear. They have done too much against him, to hope that he will pardon them. They have therefore only one alternative, and that is, to kill him. Do you not remember Cromwell's remark at Paris, when they showed him the dungeon of Vincennes, where M. de Vendôme was confined?"

"What did he say?" demanded Porthos.

"You should never touch princes, except on the head."

"I remember it," said Athos.

"And do you believe that he will not follow his own maxim, now that he has got possession of the king?"

"Yes, I am even sure of it; and this is only another and more cogent reason why we ought not to abandon the august head thus menaced."

"Athos, you are becoming mad!"

"No, my friend," mildly replied that gentleman; "but de Winter came for us in France, and introduced us to Madame Henrietta. Her majesty did us the honour to request our aid for her husband. We gave her our word—our word comprehended everything. It was our strength, our intellect, in fine, our life, that we pledged to her; and we must keep our word. Is that your opinion, d'Herblay?"

"Yes," replied Aramis; "we have promised."

"And then we have also another reason," continued Athos, "and this is it: listen attentively. At the present juncture every

thing is in a low depressed state in France. We have a king of ten years old, who, as yet, has no will of his own; we have a queen, whom a late-felt passion renders blind; we have a minister, who manages France as he would a large farm—that is to say, only thinking of what gold he can squeeze from it, by working it with Italian intrigue and craft; we have princes who oppose him from personal and egotistical motives, and who will effect nothing more than to extract from Mazarin a few ingots of gold, or a few bribes of place. I served them, not from enthusiasm, (for God knows that I estimate them at their value, and that value is not, in my estimation, very great,) but from principle. Here, the case is wholly different: here, I have encountered a lofty, a regal, an European misfortune, and I attach myself to it. Should we succeed in saving the king, it will be a splendid achievement; should we die for him, it will be a noble death."

"Therefore, you are convinced beforehand that you will perish?" said d'Artagnan.

"We fear it; and our only regret is, that we shall die far from you."

"But what can you do in a foreign and hostile country?"

"When young, I travelled in England. I speak English like a native, and Aramis also knows something of the language. Ah! if we had but you with us, d'Artagnan, and Porthos—all again reunited after a separation of twenty years—we could make head, not only against England, but against the three kingdoms!"

"And did you promise this queen," replied d'Artagnan, sarcastically, "to storm the Tower of London, to kill a hundred thousand soldiers, to struggle successfully against the will of a whole nation, and the ambition of such a man as Cromwell? You have not seen that man, my friends. He is a man of genius, who greatly reminded me of our cardinal—the other—the great Cardinal—Richelieu! Do not therefore misapprehend what you conceive to be your duty. In the name of heaven, my dear Athos, do not create for yourself a futile devotion. When I look at you, I believe that I see a rational being; but when you speak, I imagine

that I hear a madman. Come, Porthos, declare your opinion. What do you think of all this? Speak frankly."

"No good!" replied Porthos.

"I am not aware," continued d'Artagnan, annoyed on perceiving that Athos, instead of listening to him, appeared to be absorbed in his own thoughts, "that you ever found yourself injured by my advice. Well, then, believe me, Athos, your mission is terminated—terminated nobly: therefore, return to France with us."

"My friend," said Athos, "our resolution is immoveable."

"Then you must have some other motive, of which we are unapprised?"

Athos smiled. D'Artagnan stamped his foot with anger, and muttered forth every reason he could imagine; but to all these Athos contented himself with merely replying by a calm and gentle smile, and Aramis by a motion of his head.

"Well, then!" exclaimed d'Artagnan, furious with rage, "well then, since you wish it, let us leave our bones in this beggarly country, where it is always cold—where the fine weather is a perpetual mist, the mist rain, and the rain a complete deluge—where the sun is like the moon, and the moon like a cream cheese. In fact, since we must die, what matters it whether we die here or elsewhere."

"Except, my dear friend," said Athos, "that it is to die sooner."

"Bah! a little sooner or a little later, is not worth arguing about."

"What astonishes me," said Porthos, most sententiously, "is that we are not yet dead."

"Never fear, Porthos," said d'Artagnan; "that will soon be the case. So now it is agreed upon," continued the Gascon; "and if Porthos does not object—"

"As for me," said Porthos, "I will do just what you like. Besides, I much admire all that the Count de la Fère said just now."

"But your future prospects, d'Artagnan? And your ambition, Porthos?"

"Our futurity—our ambition!" said d'Artagnan, with a feverish volubility: "can we think about them, when we are saving a king? The king being saved, we assemble his friends, we beat the Puritans, we reconquer England, we re-enter London with him, we replace him firmly on the throne!"

"And he makes us lords and dukes," said Porthos, his eyes sparkling with delight, even at the idea of this visionary futurity.

"Or—he forgets us," said d'Artagnan.

"Oh!" exclaimed Porthos.

"Forsooth, such a thing has happened, friend Porthos; and I fancy that we formerly performed a service for the Queen, Anne of Austria, that was not much inferior to that we now wish to perform for Charles I.; which did not, however, prevent Anne of Austria from forgetting us during twenty years."

"Well, d'Artagnan," said Athos, "notwithstanding this, are you sorry that you rendered her that service?"

"No; by my faith," replied d'Artagnan; "and I even confess that at those times when I find myself in the worst humour, I reap consolation from that recollection."

"You see, then, d'Artagnan, that although princes are often ungrateful, God never is."

"Look ye, Athos," replied d'Artagnan; "I verily believe that if you by chance encountered Satan here on earth, you would manage him so well, that you would take him up to heaven with you."

"Therefore—" said Athos, holding out his hand to d'Artagnan;

"Therefore it is agreed," said d'Artagnan: "I find England a charming country, and I remain here; but upon one condition."

"What is that?"

"That you do not compel me to learn English."

"Very well. Now I swear to you, my friend," said Athos, in great elation, "who by that God who hears us, by my name, which I think is spotless, that I believe there is a power watches over us, and I entertain a hope that we shall all four see France again."

"So be it," said d'Artagnan; "but I confess that my conviction is precisely the reverse."

"This dear d'Artagnan," said Aramis, "represents amongst us

that parliamentary opposition which always says *no*, and always acts *yes*."

"Yes; but which, after all, saves the country," said Athos.

"Well, now that everything is settled," said Porthos, rubbing his hands, "should not we think of dinner?" I believe that, in the most critical situations of our lives, we have always dined."

"Ah! yes, indeed. But it is useless to talk of dinner in a country where, for every feast, they eat mutton boiled to a rag: and for their greatest treat they drink beer! Why did you come into such a country, Athos? Ah, pardon me!" added d'Artagnan, smiling, "I forgot that you are no longer Athos. But never mind: let us hear your plan for dinner, Porthos."

"My plan?"

"Yes; have you a plan?"

"No; I have only an appetite."

"By Jove, if that's all, I have got one also. But it is not enough to have an appetite: we must find something to eat, unless we munch some grass, like our horses."

"Ah!" said Aramis, who was not so much detached from earthly things as Athos, "when we were at Parpaillot, do you remember what beautiful oysters we used to eat?"

"And the legs of mutton, from the salt marshes," added Porthos, licking his lips.

"But," said d'Artagnan, "have we not our friend Mousqueton, who made you live so well at Chantilly, Porthos!"

"Yes, we have Mousqueton," said Porthos; "but since he became steward, he has become mighty stupid. Never mind, let us call him." And to ensure his answering pleasantly, "Halloo, Mouston?" said Porthos.

Mouston made his appearance, but with a very doleful countenance.

"What is the matter with you, my dear M. Mouston?" said d'Artagnan. "Are you ill?"

"Sir, I am very hungry," replied Mousqueton.

"Well, it is precisely on that account we called you, my dear M. Mouston. Could you ensnare us some fine little rabbits, and

some charming partridges, like those of which you made the fricassees and the hashes at the hotel de—Faith, I cannot remember the name of the hotel!"

"At the hotel de— And, by my faith," said Porthos, "neither can I remember the name of that hotel."

"Well, it is of little consequence. And, by the bye, some of those bottles of old Burgundy, which so often solaced your master's sprain?"

"Alas, sir," said Mousqueton, "I am afraid that all you ask of me is very scarce in this frightful country; and I think that we should do better if we went and demanded hospitality from the master of a small house which may be seen on the skirts of the wood."

"What, is there a house near?" inquired d'Artagnan.

"Yes, sir," replied Mousqueton.

"Well, then, as you say, we will go and request some dinner from the master of that house. Gentlemen, what do you say to this? The advice of M. Mousqueton does not seem devoid of sense, does it?"

"Ah!" said Aramis, "but should the master be a Puritan?"

"So much the better," said d'Artagnan. "Should he be a Puritan we will inform him of the king's capture, and for this news he will give us some of his white chickens."

"But should he be a cavalier?" said Porthos.

"In that case we will put on a melancholy look, and will pluck his black chickens."

"You are a happy fellow," said Athos, laughing, in spite of himself, at the sally of the indomitable Gascon; "for you always look on the sunny side of the bank."

"No wonder," said d'Artagnan, "for I come from a country where there is not a cloud on the sky."

"That is not the case here," said Porthos, stretching out his hand to make himself sure whether the fresh feeling that he began to experience was really caused by a drop of rain.

"Come, come," said d'Artagnan, "another reason that we should proceed. Halloo, Grimaud!"

Grimaud made his appearance.

"Well, Grimaud, my friend, have you seen anything?" inquired d'Artagnan.

"Nothing," replied Grimaud.

"These weak fools have not even pursued us," said Porthos. "Oh! if we had been in their place!"

"And they were wrong," said d'Artagnan. "I would willingly exchange two words with Mordaunt in this little Thebaid. What a pretty place to lay a man gently on the earth."

"Decidedly," said Aramis, "I believe, gentlemen, that the man has not the energy of the mother."

"Ah, my dear friend," replied Athos, "wait a little. We have scarcely left him two hours, and he does not yet know in what direction we have proceeded, or where we are. It will be time enough to say that he has not the powers of his mother, when we plant our feet on the soil of France; should we not, before that, be either murdered or poisoned."

"Nevertheless, in the meantime let us dine," said Porthos.

"Faith, yes," said Athos, "for I am monstrously hungry."

"And I also," said d'Artagnan.

"Remember the black chickens!" said Aramis.

And the four friends, conducted by Mousqueton, proceeded to ards the house. They were already restored to their habitual careless indifference; for, as Athos had said, they were now all four reunited, and of the same mind.

CHAPTER XVIII.

HEALTH TO FALLEN MAJESTY.

As they approached the house, our fugitives observed that the ground was much trodden, as if a considerable body of horsemen had preceded them. Before the door, these traces were even more

visible; and it was evident that this troop, whatever it might be, had halted here.

"By Jove," said d'Artagnan, "the thing is clear enough: the king and his escort have passed here."

"The fiend!" cried Porthos: "in that case, they have devoured everything."

"Bah!" said d'Artagnan, "they must have left a chicken."

And he leaped from his horse, and knocked at the door, but no one answered. He then pushed open the door, which was not fastened, and saw that the first room was empty and deserted.

"Well?" said Porthos.

"I can see no one," said d'Artagnan. "Ah! ah!"

"What?"

"Blood!"

At this word the three friends jumped from their horses, and entered the first room; but d'Artagnan had already opened the door of the second, and, by the expression of his countenance, it was clear that he beheld some extraordinary object.

The three friends approached, and perceived a man extended on the floor, and bathed in a sea of blood. It was evident that he had endeavoured to reach his bed, but his strength failing him, he had fallen before he could accomplish it.

Athos was the first who approached this unhappy wretch, for he thought that he saw him move.

"Well?" demanded d'Artagnan.

"If he is dead," said Athos, "he has not been so long; for he is yet warm. But no; his heart beats. Ha! my friend?"

The wounded man heaved a sigh. D'Artagnan took some water in the hollow of his hand, and threw it in his face. The man opened his eyes, made an effort to raise his head, and fell back again.

Athos then endeavoured to raise him on his knee; but he perceived that the wound was a little above the neck, and had laid open the back part of the skull; the blood was flowing copiously. Aramis dipped a cloth in water, and spread it over the wound: this revived the sufferer, who opened his eyes a second time. He

looked with astonishment at these three men, who appeared to pity, and endeavoured to assist him as far as they could.

"You are amongst friends," said Athos in English: "lay aside your fears, and, if you have strength enough, tell us what has happened.

"The king—" murmured the wounded man, "the king is a prisoner."

"Did you see him?" inquired Aramis, in the same language.

The man did not answer.

"Do not be afraid," said Athos, "we are some of his majesty's most faithful followers."

"Is what you tell me true?" demanded the wounded man.

"Upon our honour as gentlemen."

"Then I may tell you everything?"

"Certainly."

"I am the brother of Parry, the king's valet-de-chambre."

Athos and Aramis remembered that this was the name by which de Winter had accosted the lacquey whom they found in the passage of the royal tent.

"We know him," said Athos: "he never left the king."

"Yes, that is true," said the wounded man. "Well, then, the king being a captive, he thought of me, and, in passing this house, he requested them, in the king's name, to stop here. The request was granted. The king, they said, was hungry; and they brought him into this room, that he might take some refreshment. Sentinels were stationed at the doors and windows. Parry knew this apartment; for, whilst his majesty was at Newcastle, he had frequently come to see me. He knew that in this room there was a trap-door, that this trap-door led to a cellar, and that from this cellar they could reach the orchard. He therefore made me a sign, which I understood; but doubtless this sign was detected by the king's guards, and excited their distrust. Quite ignorant of their suspicions, I had only one wish, which was to save the king. Therefore, on pretence of looking for some wood, and thinking that no time was to be lost, I went out and entered the subterranean passage, that led to the cellar with which this trap-door communicated. I lifted up the board with my

head; and, whilst Parry gently secured the bolt of the door, I made a sign to the king to follow me. Alas! he did not wish to do so; it seemed as if this kind of flight was repugnant to him. But Parry clasped his hands in supplication, and I also implored him not to lose such an opportunity. At last he determined to follow me. Fortunately, I walked first; the king came some paces behind me. Suddenly, I beheld something like a vast shadow start up: I wished to cry out, to warn the king, but had not time. I felt a blow, as if the whole house had fallen upon my head, and became insensible."

"Good and loyal Englishman! faithful servant!" exclaimed Athos.

"When I recovered my senses, I was extended on the same spot. I dragged myself to the courtyard: the king and his escort were gone. It took me about an hour to crawl from the yard to this place; but here my strength utterly failed me, and I became insensible a second time."

"And how do you feel now?"

"Very ill," replied the wounded man.

"Can we do anything for you?" said Athos.

"Assist me to get into bed; that will give me some relief, I think."

"Will there be any one who can assist you?"

"My wife is at Durham, and will shortly return. But you—do you not want anything?"

"We came to ask you for something to eat."

"Alas! they have taken everything, and there is not a morsel of bread left in the house."

"Do you hear, d'Artagnan?" said Athos; "we must look for our dinner elsewhere."

"I do not care about it now," said d'Artagnan; "I am no longer hungry."

"Faith, nor I either," said Porthos.

They carried the man to his bed, and called for Grimaud, who dressed the wound. Grimaud had, in the service of the four friends, had so many occasions to make lint and compresses, that he had acquired some smattering of surgery.

In the meantime, the fugitives had returned to the first chamber, and were holding a consultation.

"Now," said Aramis, "we know what we are about. It is really the king and his escort, who have passed this way. We must take an opposite direction. Is that your opinion, Athos?"

Athos did not answer: he was reflecting.

"Yes," said Porthos, "let us take an opposite direction. If we follow the escort, we shall find everything devoured, and shall finish by dying of hunger. What a cursed country is this England! It is the first time that I ever went without my dinner. Dinner is my principal meal."

"What do you think, d'Artagnan?" said Athos: "are you of Aramis's opinion?"

"No," said d'Artagnan; "my opinion is directly opposed to it."

"What! would you follow the escort?" said Porthos.

"No, but pursue the journey with them."

Athos's eyes sparkled with joy.

"Journey with the escort!" cried Aramis.

"Let d'Artagnan explain himself," said Athos: "you know that he excels in council."

"There is no sort of doubt," said d'Artagnan, "that our best plan is to go where they would not think of looking for us. Now, they will have no idea of looking for us amongst the Puritans."

"Excellent advice, my friend," said Athos: "I was just going to propose it when you anticipated me."

"Then it is also your opinion?" said Aramis.

"They will think that we wish to leave England, and will seek us at the seaports. In the meantime, we shall get to London with the king. Once in London, and we are undiscoverable: in the midst of a million, there is no difficulty in concealment; without taking into consideration," continued Athos, "the chances that may offer themselves on the road."

"Yes," said Aramis, "I comprehend."

"I do not comprehend," said Porthos. "But never mind: since

this is the opinion of both Athos and d'Artagnan, it must be the best."

"But," said Aramis, "shall we not be suspected by Colonel Harrison?"

"Why, my friends," said d'Artagnan, "it is precisely upon him that I depend. Colonel Harrison is one of our friends: we saw him twice at Cromwell's. He knows that we were sent from France, by Mazarin; and he will therefore consider us as comrades. Besides, is he not a butcher's son? Well, then, Porthos will teach him how to knock down an ox with a blow of his fist; and I, how to overthrow the animal by taking him by the horns. That will secure his confidence."

Athos smiled. "You are the very best companion that I know, d'Artagnan," said he, holding out his hand to him; "and I am very happy that I have again found you, my dear son."

This, as we know, was the term that Athos always applied to d'Artagnan, when his heart overflowed.

At this moment Grimaud came in: he had dressed the wounded man, who was now much relieved. The four friends, in taking leave of him, inquired if he had any commission to give them for his brother.

"Tell him," said the brave man, "to inform the king that they did not quite kill me; for, humble as I am, I am sure that the king is sorry for me, and reproaches himself as the cause of my death."

"Be assured," said d'Artagnan, "that the king shall know it before the evening."

The little troop resumed its march. There was no mistaking the road: that which they followed was sufficiently traced across the plain. At the end of two hours' silent march, d'Artagnan, who led the party, stopped at a turn of the road.

"Aha!" said he, "here they are!"

In fact, about half a mile in advance, they saw a considerable body of horsemen.

"My dear friends," said d'Artagnan, "give your swords to M. Monston, who will return them to you at the proper time and place; and do not forget that you are our prisoners."

Putting their horses, which began to be fatigued, into a trot, they soon joined the escort.

The king, placed in front, and surrounded by a party of Harrison's troopers, was proceeding with an unmoved countenance, always dignified, and with apparent good will.

On seeing Athos and Aramis, of whom he had not been allowed to take leave—on reading in their looks that he had still some friends near him, although he thought that these friends were prisoners, a flush of pleasure mantled the pale cheeks of the king.

D'Artagnan advanced to the head of the column, leaving his friends under the guard of Porthos. He went straight up to Harrison, who recollected having seen him with Cromwell, and who received him as politely as a man of his condition and character could receive any one. As d'Artagnan had anticipated, the colonel had not the slightest suspicion.

They soon halted at the place where the king was to dine. Every precaution was taken that he might not attempt to escape. In the principal room of the inn, a small table was placed for him, and a larger one for the officers.

"Do you dine with me?" said Harrison to d'Artagnan.

"My dear colonel," said d'Artagnan, "it would give me great pleasure; but I have a companion, M. du Vallon, and my two prisoners, whom I cannot leave, and who would crowd your table. But let us do a better thing: set a table for us in one corner, and send us what you can spare from your own table; for, without that, we run the risk of dying of hunger. We shall still be dining together, as we dine in the same room."

"So be it," said Harrison.

The matter was arranged as d'Artagnan proposed; and when he rejoined the colonel, he found the king seated at his little table, attended by Parry, Harrison and his officers at the larger table, and places reserved for him and his comrades in a corner.

The table at which the Puritan officers were seated was round, and, either by chance, or from a brutal design, Harrison turned his back on the king.

The king saw the four gentlemen come in, but appeared to take

no notice of them. They seated themselves at the table reserved for them, and placed themselves in such a manner as to turn their backs on no one. They had the officers' table, and also that of the king, in front of them.

Harrison, to honour his guests, sent some of the best dishes to their table. Unfortunately for the four friends, there was no wine. To Athos, this was quite immaterial; but d'Artagnan, Porthos, and Aramis made wry faces every time they swallowed that Puritan beverage, the beer.

"Faith, colonel," said d'Artagnan, "we are very grateful to you for your polite invitation; for without you, we ran the risk of going without our dinner, as we did without our breakfast; and here is my friend, M. du Vallon, who shares my gratitude, for he was desperately hungry."

"I am hungry still," said Porthos, bowing to Harrison.

"And how did it happen that you lost your breakfast?" said Harrison, laughing.

"For a very simple reason, colonel," replied d'Artagnan. "I was in great haste to join you; and, to accomplish it, I took the same road that you did, which, old forager as I am, I ought not to have done, knowing well enough that nothing can remain, where a good and brave regiment like yours has passed. We halted at a pretty little house, situated on the edge of a wood, and which, from a distance, with its red-tiled roof and green shutters, had such a smiling appearance that it was quite a pleasure to look at it; but you may imagine our disappointment, when instead of finding chickens there, which we were ready to roast, and legs of mutton, which we calculated on grilling, we saw nothing but a poor devil bathed——Ah! my dear colonel, make my respects to that officer of yours who gave that blow: it was well given, indeed—so well, that it even excited the admiration of my friend, M. du Vallon, who also gives blows with great neatness."

"Yes," said Harrison, laughing, and looking at an officer seated at the table, "when Groslow undertakes that sort of work, there is no need of coming after him."

"Ah, it was that gentleman?" said d'Artagnan, bowing to the

officer: I regret that he does not speak French, that I might pay him a compliment upon it."

"I am quite ready to receive and to return it, sir," said the officer, in pretty good French; "for I lived in Paris for three years."

"Well then, sir, I am anxious to tell you," continued d'Artagnan, "that the blow was so well applied, that you almost killed your man."

"I thought that I had quite killed him," said Groslow.

"No. It was a pretty near thing, it is true; but he is not dead."

And, in saying these words, d'Artagnan threw a glance at Parry, (who, pale and motionless, was standing near the king,) to let him know that this news was intended for him.

As for the king, he had listened to this conversation with indescribable anguish: he did not know what the French officer was going to say, and these cruel particulars, related in a tone of careless indifference, greatly revolted him. But at the last words he began to breathe more freely.

"Zounds!" said Groslow, "I thought I had succeeded better; and were it not so far to the house of that wretch, I would return to finish him."

"And you would do well, if you fear his recovery," said d'Artagnan; "for you know that wounds on the head, if they are not immediately mortal, are generally cured in the space of eight days."

And d'Artagnan threw a second glance at Parry, over whose countenance such an expression of joy was diffused, that Charles stretched out his hand to him, smiling. Parry bent over his master's hand, and respectfully kissed it.

"Really," whispered Athos to d'Artagnan, "you are an eloquent man, and a man of talent. But what do you think of the king?"

"His countenance much pleases me," said d'Artagnan; "he has an expression at once noble and good."

"Yes, but he allowed himself to be taken," said Porthos: "that was wrong."

"I have a great desire to drink the king's health," said Athos.

"Then let me propose his health," said d'Artagnan.

"Do so," said Aramis.

"Porthos looked at d'Artagnan, quite astounded by the resources that his Gascon wit supplied incessantly to his comrade.

D'Artagnan took his tin goblet, filled it, and rose. "Gentlemen, said he to his companions, "let us drink, if you please, to him who presides over this repast—to our colonel, and let him understand that we are entirely at his service, to London, or beyond it."

And as d'Artagnan looked at Harrison whilst he spoke, Harrison believed that the toast was intended for him. He therefore rose up, and bowed to the four friends, who, with their eyes fixed on the king, drank together; whilst Harrison emptied his goblet without the slightest suspicion.

Charles, on his part, held out his glass to Parry, who poured into it some drops of beer—for the king was restricted to the same beverage as the others; then putting it to his lips, and looking towards the four gentlemen, he drank, with a smile full of dignity and gratitude.

"Come, gentlemen, we must move," said Harrison, setting down his glass, and without evincing the slightest consideration for the illustrious prisoner he was conducting.

"Where do we sleep, colonel?"

"At Thirsk," replied Harrison.

"Parry," said the king, rising and turning towards his valet, "my horse: I wish to go and sleep at Thirsk."

"Faith," said d'Artagnan to Athos, "your king has quite enchanted me, and I am entirely at his service."

"If what you say is sincere," replied Athos, "he will not reach London."

"How so?"

"Why, because we shall have carried him off before he gets there."

"Really," said d'Artagnan, "upon my honour, Athos, you are mad."

"Have you, then, devised any project?" asked Aramis.

"Ah!" said Porthos, "the thing would not be impossible, provided we had but a good project."

I have not got one," said Athos; "but d'Artagnan will find one."

D'Artagnan shrugged his shoulders, and they resumed their journey.

CHAPTER XIX.

D'ARTAGNAN DISCOVERS A PROJECT.

Athos knew d'Artagnan better perhaps than he knew himself. As it is sufficient to drop a seed into a strong and fertile soil, he was fully aware that it was only necessary to let an idea fall upon the adventurous spirit of the Gascon. He had therefore let his friend quietly shrug his shoulders, and had continued his route, talking of Raoul—a subject of conversation which, it may be remembered, he had completely avoided on another occasion.

At the close of day they reached Thirsk. The four friends appeared perfectly indifferent to the precautions taken to secure the king's person. They retired to a private house; and, as they had constant fears on their own account, they established themselves in one room, taking care to secure a means of retreat in case of attack. The lacqueys were stationed at different points; but Grimaud slept on a bundle of straw across the door-way.

D'Artagnan was thoughtful, and, for a time, appeared to have lost his customary loquacity. He did not say a word, but whistled incessantly, and kept wandering from his bed to the window. Porthos, who never saw further than the outside of things, talked to him as usual. D'Artagnan answered him by monosyllables. Athos and Aramis regarded him with a smile.

The journey had been very fatiguing; and yet, with the exception of Porthos, whose sleep was as inflexible as his appetite, the friends slept badly.

" The next morning, d'Artagnan was up first. He had already gone down to the stables, examined the horses, and given all the necessary orders for the day; whilst Athos and Aramis were yet in bed, and Porthos was still snoring.

At eight in the morning they resumed their march, in the same order as on the previous day; except that d'Artagnan, leaving his friends to journey together, went forward to renew the acquaintance commenced the evening before with M. Groslow, who, flattered by d'Artagnan's eulogiums, received him most graciously.

" Really, sir," said d'Artagnan to him, " I am most fortunate in finding some one with whom I may talk my poor language. M. du Vallon, my friend, is of a very melancholy temperament, so that it is difficult to extract four words a day from him; and as for our two prisoners, you can imagine that they are not in a good mood for conversation."

" They are violent royalists," said Groslow.

" Another reason for their pouting at us because we have taken the Stuart, whom, by the by, I hope you mean incontinently to bring to trial."

" Forsooth," said Groslow, " we are taking him to London for that very purpose."

" And you will not lose sight of him, I presume ?"

" I believe so, indeed! You may perceive," added the officer, laughing, " that he has a truly regal escort."

" Oh! during the day, there is no danger of his escaping; but at night—"

" During the night, our precautions are redoubled."

" What mode do you adopt, so as to ensure his safety ?"

" Eight men remain constantly in his chamber."

" By Jove !" said d'Artagnan, " he is well guarded. But, besides these eight men, no doubt you place a guard outside ? Too great precautions cannot be taken against such a prisoner."

" Oh, no. Only consider: what could two unarmed men do against eight men with arms ?"

" How, two men ?"

" Yes, the king and his valet-de-chambre.'

"Then you allow his valet to remain with him?"

"Yes; Stuart requested this favour, and Colonel Harrison granted it. On pretence of his being king, it appears that he cannot dress and undress himself without assistance."

"Really, captain," said d'Artagnan, resolved to continue the laudatory system that had succeeded so well—"the more I listen to you, the more astonished I am at the easy and elegant manner in which you speak French. You lived three years in Paris, you say. Well, I might pass all my life in London, I am quite sure, without reaching the perfection that you have acquired. How did you occupy yourself in Paris?"

"My father, who is a merchant, had placed me with his agent, who, in return, sent his son to my father: it is a custom amongst merchants to make such exchanges."

"And were you pleased with Paris, sir?"

"Yes. But you sadly want a revolution, like our own; not against your king, who is a mere child, but against that rascally Italian, who is your queen's lover."

"Ah! I am quite of your opinion, sir; and it could soon be managed if we had only a dozen officers, like yourself, without prejudices, vigilant, and incorruptible. Ah! we should soon settle that Mazarin, and treat him with a nice little trial, as you are going to do with your king."

"But," said the officer, "I thought that you were in his service, and that it was he who sent you to General Cromwell?"

"That is to say, I am in the king's service; and knowing that he wanted to send some one into England, I applied for the mission, so great was my desire to become acquainted with the great man who at present governs the three kingdoms. Therefore, when he proposed to M. du Vallon and myself to draw our swords in honour of old England, you saw how we jumped at the proposition."

"Yes, I know that you charged by the side of M. Mordaunt."

"On his right and left, sir. Faith, that is a brave and excellent young man. How he doubled up his uncle. Did you see it?"

"Do you know him?" demanded the officer.

"Yes, very well: I may even say that we are very intimate. M. du Vallon and I came from France with him."

"It seems that you kept him waiting a long time at Boulogne."

"What would you have?" said d'Artagnan. "Like you, I was guarding a king."

"Ah!" said Groslow: "what king?"

"Ours, by Jove! the little King, Louis XIV." And d'Artagnan took off his hat. The Englishman did the same.

"And how long did you guard him?"

"Three nights; and, by my faith, I shall always remember these three nights with pleasure."

"The young king, then, is very amiable?"

"The king? He slept like a top."

"What did you mean, then?"

"I mean, that my friends, the officers of the guards and musketeers, came to bear me company, and that we passed our nights in drinking and playing."

"Ah, yes!" said the Englishman with a sigh; "it is true, you Frenchmen are joyous companions."

"Do you not play, then, when you are on guard?"

"Never," replied the Englishman.

"In that case you must be monstrously tired, and I pity you," said d'Artagnan.

"The fact is," replied the officer, "that I see my turn come round with a certain terror. A whole night is a dreadful long time to watch."

"Yes, when one watches alone, with a parcel of stupid soldiers; but when one watches with a pleasant comrade, and the gold and the dice roll along the table, the night passes like a dream. Do not you like play, then?"

"Quite the contrary."

"Lansquenet, for instance?"

"I am passionately fond of it: I played it almost every night in France."

"And since your return to England?"

"I have not touched a dice-box or a card."

"I pity you!" said d'Artagnan, with an air of profound compassion.

"Listen," said the Englishman: "do one thing for me?"

"What is that?"

"To-morrow I am on guard."

"Over the Stuart?"

"Yes. Come and pass the night with me?"

"Impossible!"

"Impossible?"

"Yes, altogether impossible."

"Why so?"

"Every night I play with M. du Vallon. Sometimes we do not even go to bed: this morning, for instance, we were playing till daylight."

"Well, what then?"

"He would not know what to do, if I did not play with him."

"Is he a good player?"

"I have seen him lose two thousand pistoles, laughing with tears in his eyes."

"Then bring him with you."

"How can I do that, with our prisoners?"

"Ah the deuce, that 's true!" said the officer. "But make your lacqueys guard them."

"Yes, that may they escape!" said d'Artagnan. "I have no guards."

"They are men of rank, then, since you take such care of them."

"Yes, indeed. One is a rich nobleman of Touraine; the other, a knight of Malta, of a high family. We have settled their ransom—two thousand pounds sterling, on reaching France. We are, therefore, unwilling to trust men known to be so rich, to our lacqueys. We have pretty well searched their pockets since we took them; and I will confess to you, that it is their purse that we keep handling every night, M. du Vallon and myself. But they may have concealed from us some jewel, some valuable diamond; so that we are like misers, who do not leave their treasure. We have constituted our-

selves permanent guardians of our men, and when I sleep, M. du Vallon watches."

"Quite right," said Groslow.

"You therefore now understand why I am compelled to refuse your polite attentions, of which I am the more sensible, as nothing is so tiresome as always to play with the same person. The chances always balance each other, and, at the end of a month, one finds that nothing has been done."

"Ah!" said Groslow, with a sigh, "there is one thing still more tiresome, and that is, never to play at all."

"I can well understand that," said d'Artagnan.

"But let us see," said the Englishman: "are these two men of yours dangerous?"

"In what respect?"

"Are they likely to attempt an escape?"

D'Artagnan roared with laughter. "Oh, my God!" he exclaimed, "one of them is eaten up by fever, because he is unable to bear the charming country you inhabit; and the other, although a knight of Malta, is as timid as a young girl. But besides, for greater security, we have even deprived them of their clasp knives and pocket scissors."

"Well, then, bring them with you."

"Do you really wish it?" said d'Artagnan.

"Yes; I have eight men with me."

"And what then?"

"Four shall guard them, and four shall guard the king."

"Why, the affair might be managed in that manner," said d'Artagnan; "though it would be giving you a great deal of trouble."

"Bah! remember that you come: you shall see how I will arrange everything."

"Oh! I do not disturb myself about that," said d'Artagnan; "I would trust such a man as you are with my eyes blindfolded."

This last dose of flattery extracted from the officer one of those gentle laughs of satisfaction which are sure indications of friendship towards those who excite them, although they are, at the same time, the ebullitions of gratified vanity.

"But," said d'Artagnan, "I have been thinking what there is to hinder our commencing this very evening."

"What?"

"Our play."

"Nothing in the world," said Groslow.

"Well, then, come this evening to us, and to-morrow we will return your visit. Should you feel any distrust of our two men, who, as you know, are violent royalists, why then there will be nothing more to say about it: you will, at any rate, have passed a pleasant evening."

"Excellent! This evening, at your house; to-morrow. at the Stuart's; the day after, at mine."

"And the other days in London. Ah, captain!" said d'Artagnan, "you see that one may pass a pleasant life anywhere."

"Yes, when one meets Frenchmen, and such Frenchmen as you are."

"And as to M. du Vallon—you will see what a merry fellow he is! He was monstrous near killing Mazarin on two occasions. They employ him because they fear him."

"Yes," said Groslow, "he has a fine figure; and, without knowing him, he much pleases my fancy."

"He will please you still more when you know him But, hark, he is calling me. Pardon me; we are so united that he cannot do without me. Will you excuse me?"

"How is it settled, then?"

"For this evening—"

"At your lodgings?"

"Yes."

The two men exchanged bows, and d'Artagnan returned to his companions.

"What the plague can you have been saying to that bull-dog?" inquired Porthos

"My dear friend, do not speak in that manner of M. Groslow: he is one of my most intimate friends."

"One of your friends!" said Porthos—"that peasant murderer!"

"Hush! my dear Porthos. Although M. Groslow is certainly a

little sharp, yet I have found that he has two good qualities—he is a blockhead, and he is vain."

Porthos opened his astonished eyes. Athos and Aramis looked at each other with a smile: they knew d'Artagnan, and were well assured that he never did any thing without a motive.

"But," continued d'Artagnan, "you will judge of him yourselves."

"How so?"

"I shall introduce him to you this evening. He is coming to play with you."

"Aha!" said Porthos, whose eyes sparkled at these words, "he is rich, then?"

"He is the son of one of the first merchants in London."

"And does he know lansquenet?"

"He adores it,"

"And basset?"

"It is his hobby."

"Biribi?"

"He is most skilful at it."

"Good," said Porthos; "we shall pass a most agreeable evening."

"The more agreeable, as it is the prelude to one still more so."

"How is that?"

"Why, we entertain him this evening; and to-morrow he will entertain us."

"Where?"

"I will tell you. But, in the meantime let us attend to one thing only; and that is, worthily to receive the honour that M. Groslow pays us. This evening, we shall stop at Derby. Let Mousqueton go forward; and, if there be only one bottle of wine in the whole town, let him buy it. Nor would it be amiss if he also prepared a good supper; of which, however, you must not partake, Athos, because you have got a fever, nor you, Aramis, because you are a knight of Malta, and the proceedings of such old campaigners as we are, much displease you, and make you blush. Do you hear all this?"

"Yes," said Porthos; "but the devil take me if I can understand it."

"Porthos, my friend, you must know that I descend from the prophets on my father's side, and from the sybils on my mother's, so that I only speak in parables and enigmas. Let those who have ears, listen, and those who have eyes, look. I can say no more at present."

"Act my friend," said Athos; "I am quite sure that what you do will be well done."

"And are you of the same opinion, Aramis?"

"Quite so, my dear d'Artagnan."

"Very well," said d'Artagnan; "you are true believers, and there is some pleasure in working miracles for you. You are not like that incredulous Porthos, who always wants to see and feel, in order to believe."

"The fact is," said Porthos, with a sharp look, "I am very sceptical."

D'Artagnan patted him on the shoulder; and, as they then arrived at the place where they were to dine, the conversation finished.

About five o'clock in the evening, they sent Mousqueton forward, as had been arranged. Mousqueton could not speak English; but, since he had been in England, he had remarked that Grimaud, from his skill in signs, had made speech perfectly useless and unnecessary. He had, therefore, studied Grimaud's gestures, and, after some few lessons, thanks to the goodness of the master, he had acquired a tolerable degree of skill. Blaisois accompanied him.

The four friends, on crossing the principal street of Derby, perceived Blaisois standing at the door of a house of good appearance: it was there that quarters were prepared for them.

During the whole day they had not gone near the king, for fear of exciting suspicions; and instead of dining at Colonel Harrison's table, as they had done on the previous day, they dined by themselves.

Groslow came at the hour appointed, and d'Artagnan received him as if he had been a friend of twenty years' standing. Porthos measured him from top to toe, and smiled on perceiving, that, in

spite of the blow he had given to Parry's brother, he was not his equal in strength. Athos and Aramis did all they could to conceal the disgust that his coarse and brutal manners inspired. In fine, Groslow appeared to be satisfied with his reception.

Athos and Aramis kept up their characters. At midnight they retired to their chamber, the door of which was left open, under pretence of watchfulness. Besides, d'Artagnan accompanied them, leaving Porthos engaged with Groslow.

Porthos won fifty pistoles from Groslow, and thought, after he was gone, that his company was much more agreeable than he had at first expected. As for Groslow, he promised himself, on the morrow, to revenge on d'Artagnan the check he had received from Porthos, and left the Gascon with reminding him of the appointment for the evening. We say the evening, for the players separated at four in the morning.

The day passed as usual. D'Artagnan went from Groslow to Colonel Harrison, and from Colonel Harrison to his friends. To any one who did not know him, d'Artagnan appeared to be in his usual state of mind. To his friends—that is to say, to Athos and Aramis —his gaiety appeared forced and feverish.

"What can he be planning?" said Aramis.

"Let us wait," replied Athos.

Porthos said nothing; he only counted one after the other in his, fob, with an air of satisfaction that betrayed itself externally, the fifty pistoles that he had won from Groslow.

On reaching Ryston,* in the evening, d'Artagnan assembled his friends. His countenance had lost that expression of careless gaiety it had worn as a mask during the day. Athos pressed Aramis's hand.

* It may be almost superfluous to remind the reader that no reliance can be placed on M. Dumas's accuracy on any matters relating to England, at least in so far as regards the manners and customs of the people, or the topography of the country. In the present instance, he has not only indicated a place which is not to be found in the kingdom, but has assigned to it a locality so near London, that, even if it did exist, the journey from Derby thither could not possibly have been performed in one day, at the period and under the circumstances referred to in the narrative. Whilst, therefore, we have permitted him to relate, in his own felicitous manner, the adventures of his heroes, we have felt it our duty to enter our protest against this absurd blunder.—TRANSLATOR.

"The moment is approaching," he said.

"Yes," said d'Artagnan, who had heard him—"yes, the moment approaches. This night, gentlemen, we save the king."

Athos started: his eyes sparkled. "D'Artagnan," said he, doubt involuntarily mingling with his hopes, "this is no joke, is it? It would hurt my feelings too much."

"It is very singular, Athos," replied d'Artagnan, "that you should doubt me in this manner. When did you find me jest with a friend's heart, or a king's life? I have said to you, and I repeat it, that this night we save King Charles. You trusted to me to find some method: the method is found."

Porthos looked at d'Artagnan with a feeling of profound admiration; Aramis smiled, like a man full of hope; Athos was deadly pale, and trembled in all his limbs.

"Speak," said Athos.

Porthos opened his large eyes; Aramis hung, as it were, on d'Artagnan's lips.

"We are invited to spend the evening with M. Groslow; you are aware of that?"

"Yes," replied Porthos; "he made us promise to give him his revenge."

"Very well. But do you know where we are to give him his revenge?"

"No."

"In the king's apartments."

"In the king's apartments?" exclaimed Athos.

"Yes gentlemen, in the king's apartments. M. Groslow is on guard to-night over his majesty; and, to divert him in his duty, he invites us to keep him company."

"All four?" demanded Athos.

"Certainly; all four. How can we leave our prisoners?"

"Ah ah!" cried Aramis.

"Let us see," said Athos, much excited.

"We go, therefore, to M. Groslow—we with our swords, you with your poignards. We four must master those eight imbeciles,

and their stupid commander. What do you say to that, M. Porthos?"

"I say that it is easy enough," answered Porthos.

"We dress the king in Groslow's clothes; Mousqueton, Grimaud, and Blaisois hold our horses all ready, at the corner of the first street; we leap upon them, and, before daylight, we are twenty leagues from hence. Now is that well planned, Athos?"

Athos placed his hand on d'Artagnan's shoulders, and looked at him with his calm and soft smile. "I declare my friend," said he, "that there is no creature under heaven that equals you in magnanimity and courage. Whilst we have been imagining that you were indifferent to our sorrows, (which you really might have refused to share, without criminality,) you alone have found what we vainly sought. I therefore repeat, d'Artagnan, that you are better than we are, and I bless and love you, my dear son!"

"Only to think that I could not find out that!" said Porthos, clapping his hand to his forehead, "although it is so simple."

"But," said Aramis, "if I understand correctly, we are to kill them all—are we not?"

Athos shuddered, and turned very pale.

"Why, faith," said d'Artagnan, "it is absolutely necessary. For a long time I sought for some method to avoid it, but I confess that I could find none."

"Let us see," said Aramis; "we must face our situation boldly. How are we to proceed?"

"I have formed a double plan," replied d'Artagnan.

"Let us hear the first," said Aramis.

"Should we be all four together, at my signal—and this signal shall be the words '*at last*'—each of you must plunge a poignard into the heart of the soldier who is nearest to you, and we must do the same. Thus, four men will be at once disposed of, and the odds become more equal, as we shall then be four to five. Those five will either surrender, and we shall gag them, or they will resist, and we must kill them. Should our Amphyctrion change his mind, and not receive more than two of us, why then, forsooth, I and Porthos shall have harder work, and must strike double: it will make it rather

longer, and cause more disturbance; but you will be ready outside and must hasten to us at the first noise."

"But should you yourselves be struck?" said Athos.

"Impossible," said d'Artagnan: "these beer-swillers are too heavy and awkward. Besides, you must strike at the throat, Porthos: it kills as quickly, and prevents your antagonist calling out."

"Very well!" said Porthos: "it will be a pretty little throat-cutting."

"Horrible! horrible!" exclaimed Athos.

"Bah! you sensitive gentleman," said d'Artagnan; "you would kill many more in the field of battle. Besides, my friend," continued he, "if you find that the king's life is not worth what it will cost, why, nothing has been said, and I will send to inform M. Groslow that I am unwell."

"No," said Athos: "I am wrong, and you are right, my friend. Pardon me."

At this very moment the door opened, and a soldier appeared.

"Captain Groslow," said he, in execrable French, "informs M. d'Artagnan and M. du Vallon that he is waiting for them."

"Where?" asked d'Artagnan.

"In the chamber of the English Nebuchadnezzar," replied the soldier, an outrageous Puritan.

"Very well," said Athos, in excellent English, and colouring at the insult offered to royalty—"Very well; tell Captain Groslow that we are coming."

The Puritan being gone, orders were given to the lacqueys to saddle eight horses, and to wait with them, without separating or dismounting, at the corner of a street, situated at about twenty paces from the house in which the king lodged.

CHAPTER XX.

THE GAME OF LANSQUENET.

It was now nine in the evening. The guard had been relieved at eight, and, for one whole hour, Captain Groslow had commenced his duty.

D'Artagnan and Porthos, armed with their swords, and Athos and Aramis, each having a poignard concealed in his bosom, proceeded towards the house which that evening served as the prison of Charles Stuart. The two last followed their conquerors, humble, and apparently unarmed, as prisoners.

"Faith," said Groslow, on seeing them, "I had almost given you up."

D'Artagnan went up to him, and said in a low voice—"In fact, we were for some time rather doubtful about coming, M. du Vallon and myself."

"Why so?" inquired Groslow.

D'Artagnan cast a significant glance at Athos and Aramis.

"Ah!" said Groslow, "on account of their opinions? But that is of no consequence. On the contrary," he added, laughing, "if they wish to see their Stuart, they shall see him."

"Are we to pass the night in the king's chamber?" said d'Artagnan.

"No, but in the adjoining room; and as the door will remain open, it will be exactly the same thing as if we remained in the chamber itself. Have you provided yourself with money? for I promise you that I mean to have a tremendous game."

"Do you hear?" said d'Artagnan, making the gold sound in his pockets.

"Very good," said Groslow, as he opened the door of the chamber. "I will show you the way, gentlemen," he continued. And he went in first.

D'Artagnan turned towards his friends. Porthos was as careless as if nothing out of the common way was going on; Athos was

pale, but resolved. Aramis wiped the perspiration from his forehead with his handkerchief.

The eight guards were at their posts: four were in the king's chamber, two at the door leading into it, and two at the outer door by which the four friends entered the first room. At sight of their naked swords, Athos smiled: it would not, therefore, be a butchery, but a combat. From this moment all his good-humour returned.

Charles, whom they perceived through the open door, was lying on his bed, completely dressed, but with a woollen coverlet thrown over him. At his bedside Parry was seated, reading in a low voice, yet sufficiently loud for Charles to hear; and the king, with his eyes closed, was attentively listening to a chapter from a catholic Bible. A coarse tallow candle, placed upon a dirty table, cast a sickly gleam across the resigned countenance of the king, and that of his less calm attendant.

Parry left off reading occasionally, thinking that his master was really asleep; but then the king opened his eyes, and said, with a smile, "Go on, my good Parry; I am listening."

Groslow advanced to the door of the king's chamber, put on his hat, which he had removed to receive his guests, looked with contempt at this touching picture, of an old servant reading the Bible to his royal prisoner, assured himself that every man was at his post, and then, turning towards d'Artagnan, he looked triumphantly at the Frenchman, as if to demand an eulogium on his skill.

"Excellent," said the Gascon. "By Jove, you would make a distinguished general."

"And do you think," said Groslow, "that the Stuart will have any chance of escape when I am on duty?"

"Certainly not," replied d'Artagnan, "unless friends should be showered upon him from heaven."

The countenance of Groslow expanded.

As the king had kept his eyes constantly closed during this scene, it was impossible to say whether he had or had not perceived the insolence of the Puritan captain. But, in spite of himself, when the clear accentuated tone of d'Artagnan's voice met his ear, his eyelids opened. Parry, on his part, started, and discontinued his reading.

"Why do you leave off?" said the king: "continue, my good Parry, at least if you are not fatigued."

"No, sire," said the valet. And he resumed his reading.

A table was prepared in the first room, and on this were two lighted candles, cards, two dice-boxes, and dice.

"Gentlemen," said Groslow, "be seated, I beseech you. I will sit opposite Stuart, whom I so much like to see, especially where he now is; you, M. d'Artagnan, opposite me."

Athos coloured with anger, and d'Artagnan frowned at him.

"That's it," said d'Artagnan. "You, Count de la Fère, on the right of M. Groslow; you, Chevalier d'Herblay, on his left; and you, M. du Vallon, near me. You bet upon me, and those gentlemen on M. Groslow."

By this arrangement, d'Artagnan had Porthos on his left, and he spoke to him by his knee; whilst opposite to him were Athos and Aramis, whom he governed by his look.

When the Count de la Fère and the Chevalier d'Herblay were mentioned, Charles again opened his eyes, and could not refrain from raising his noble head, and embracing in one look all the actors in that scene.

At the same moment Parry turned over some leaves of the Bible, and read in a loud voice this verse of Jeremiah:—

"God said, hear the words of the prophets, my servants, whom I have sent to you, and whom I have given you."

The four friends exchanged a look. The words that Parry had just read, indicated that the king attributed their presence to the right motive. The eyes of d'Artagnan and his companions sparkled with joy.

"You asked me, just now, whether I was in cash," said d'Artagnan, putting about twenty pistoles on the table.

"Yes," said Groslow.

"Well, then, in return I tell you to guard your treasure well, my dear M. Groslow, for I promise you that we shall not leave the room without carrying it off from you."

"It shall not be without my defending it," said Groslow.

"So much the better," said d'Artagnan. "A good battle, you

know, my dear captain, or perhaps you do not know—that is all we want."

"Ah! I know well enough," said Groslow, bursting into a horse-laugh, "that you Frenchmen are always looking after sores and bumps."

Charles had heard and comprehended all this, and a slight colour mounted to his cheeks. The soldiers who guarded him saw him gradually extend his wearied limbs, and, under the pretence of excessive heat, produced by a red-hot stove, throw off the coverlet under which, as we have said, he was laid, completely attired.

Athos and Aramis started with joy on perceiving that the king was dressed.

The game commenced. This evening the luck had turned, and was in favour of Groslow: he took all, and gained all. A hundred pistoles therefore passed from one side of the table to the other. Groslow was in high spirits.

Porthos, who, in addition to the fifty pistoles he had gained the previous evening, had lost thirty more, was very cross, and questioned d'Artagnan, by pressing his knee, as if to ask him whether it was not time to commence another kind of game. Athos and Aramis also looked at him from time to time, with a scrutinizing glance; but he remained perfectly unmoved.

It struck ten o'clock. The round was heard passing.

"How many rounds do you make of this kind?" said d'Artagnan, drawing some more pistoles from his pocket.

"Five," answered Groslow. "One every two hours."

"It is prudent," said d'Artagnan. And he cast a glance at Athos and Aramis.

The steps of the patrol were heard retreating; and d'Artagnan now for the first time answered Porthos's pressure of the knee, by one of a similar kind.

In the meantime the soldiers, whose orders were to remain in the king's apartment, attracted by the play, and the sight of gold, so fascinating to all men, had gradually approached the door, and there, raising themselves on their toes, were looking over the shoulders of d'Artagnan and Porthos. The two at the other door had also drawn

near; thus favouring the designs of the four friends, who much preferred having them near at hand, to being obliged to run after them into different parts of the room. The two sentinels at the outer door had their swords drawn, but rested themselves on them, with their points to the ground, and thus watched the players.

As the moment approached Athos appeared, to become calm: his white aristocratic hands kept fingering the louis as if they had been made of tin. Aramis, less master of his feelings, was continually putting his hands into his bosom; whilst Porthos, irritated by his losses, knocked d'Artagnan's knee as if he would fracture it.

D'Artagnan turned round, looking in a natural way behind him, and saw Parry standing between two of the soldiers, and Charles leaning on his elbow, with his hands clasped, and apparently addressing a fervent prayer to God. D'Artagnan then perceived that the time was come, that every one was at his post, and that they only waited for the words "*at last*," which, it may be remembered, were to serve as the signal.

He threw a preparatory glance at Athos and Aramis; and both of them gently pushed back their chairs, to have free liberty of action.

He gave Porthos another touch on the knee, upon which he arose as if to stretch his legs, and, in rising, he made himself certain that his sword would leave its scabbard easily.

"Zounds!" cried d'Artagnan, "twenty more pistoles lost! Really, Captain Groslow, you have extraordinary luck: it never can last." And he drew twenty more pistoles from his pocket.

"A last throw, captain: these twenty pistoles on one last throw."

"Done for twenty pistoles!" said Groslow. And he turned two cards in the usual manner—a king for d'Artagnan, and an ace for himself.

"A king," said d'Artagnan, "it is a good omen. Master Groslow," he added, "take care of the king."

And, in spite of his command over himself, there was a strange quivering in his voice, that made his partner start.

Groslow began to turn the cards one after the other. If he

turned an ace first, he had won; if he turned a king, he had lost. He turned a king.

"*At last!*" said d'Artagnan.

At these words Athos and Aramis rose up, Porthos drew back a step, and poignards and swords were just going to flash out, when suddenly the door opened, and Harrison made his appearance on the threshold, accompanied by a man enveloped in a cloak. Behind this man the muskets of five or six soldiers were seen to glitter.

Groslow arose in great haste, ashamed of being surprised in the midst of wine, cards, and dice. But Harrison took no notice whatever of him, and entered the king's chamber, followed by his companions.

"Charles Stuart," said he, "an order has arrived to conduct you to London without halting night or day: prepare, therefore, to depart instantaneously."

"And from whom has this order come?" asked the king.

"From General Cromwell. And," continued Harrison, "here is Mr. Mordaunt, who has just brought it, and is charged with its execution."

"Mordaunt!" murmured the four friends, looking at each other.

D'Artagnan quietly swept from the table all the money that he and Porthos had lost, and engulfed it in his enormous pocket. Athos and Aramis drew themselves up behind him. At this movement Mordaunt turned round, recognised them, and uttered an exclamation of savage delight.

"I believe that we are caught," said d'Artagnan to his friends, in a low voice.

"Not yet," said Porthos.

"Colonel! colonel!" cried Mordaunt, "surround the room! You are betrayed! These four Frenchmen escaped from Newcastle, and doubtless want to carry off the king. Arrest them!"

"Ah, young man!" said d'Artagnan, drawing his sword; "such an order is more easily given than executed."

Then giving a terrible circular flourish with his sword—"Retreat, my friends!" he exclaimed, "retreat!"

At the same time he rushed towards the door, and overthrew the

two soldiers who guarded it, before they had time to present their muskets. Athos and Aramis followed him, Porthos bringing up the rear; and before the soldiers, officers, and colonel, had time to recover from their consternation, they were in the street.

"Fire!" cried Mordaunt—"fire upon them!"

Two or three musket-shots were fired, which had no further effect than that of disclosing the four fugitives, just turning the corner of the street, quite safe and sound.

The horses were at the appointed place, and the valets had only to throw the bridles to their masters, who vaulted into the saddle with the lightness of consummate horsemen.

"Forward!" said d'Artagnan, "and spur on! Be steady."

They galloped on in this manner, following d'Artagnan, and taking the same road by which they had entered in the evening; that is to say, the direction of Scotland. The little town had neither walls nor gates, and they left it without obstruction. At about fifty paces from the last house, d'Artagnan stopped short.

"Halt!" said he.

"What do you mean by halt?" inquired Porthos. "At speed, you mean to say."

"Not at all," said d'Artagnan. "This time they will pursue us; therefore let them leave the town, and run after us on the road to Scotland; and when we have seen them galloping past us, we will set off in the opposite direction."

A small rivulet crossed the road a little further on, and over this stream a bridge was thrown. D'Artagnan led his horse under the arch of the bridge, and was followed by his friends. They had not been there ten minutes, before the rapid gallop of a troop of horsemen was heard. In five minutes more, this troop had passed over their heads, little imagining that they had been separated from those they sought only by the thickness of the arch of the bridge.

CHAPTER XXI.

LONDON.

When the noise of the horses was lost in the distance, d'Artagnan regained the bank of the little river, and began to make his way across the plain, gradually bearing in the direction of London. His three friends followed him in silence, until, by means of a large circuit, they had left the town far behind them.

"And now," said d'Artagnan, when at length he thought that they were far enough from the point of their departure, to change from a gallop to a trot—"I positively think that all is lost, and that the best thing we can do, is to return to France. What do you say to this proposition, Athos? Do you not think it reasonable enough?"

"Yes, my dear friend," replied Athos; "but you said one thing, the other day, that was far more reasonable—it was a noble and generous sentiment—'we will die here.' I repeat your very words."

"Yes," said Porthos, "death is nothing. It is not that which ought to disturb us, since we know not what it is; but it is the idea of defeat that disturbs me. By the manner in which things turn out, I can perceive that we must fight in London, in the provinces, throughout all England; and really we must be beaten at last."

"We ought to participate in this great tragedy to the end," said Athos. "Whatever it may be, we should not leave England until the catastrophe. Are you of my opinion, Aramis?"

"Entirely so, my dear count. Besides, I confess that I should not be sorry to see this Mordaunt again. It seems to me that we have an account to settle with him; and it is not our custom to leave a country without paying these kind of debts."

"Ah! it is another thing," said d'Artagnan, "now that you have produced a plausible reason. As for me, I confess, that, to find Mordaunt, I would remain a year in London, if necessary. Only, let us lodge with some trusty man, and in a manner to avoid suspicion; for Cromwell will certainly inquire after us, and as far as I

can judge, he is no joker, that M. Cromwell. Athos, do you know, in all the city, an hotel where we can find clean sheets, roast beef reasonably cooked, and wine that is not made of hops or gin?"

"I fancy that I know just what you wish," replied Athos. "De Winter took us to the house of a man, who, he said, was an old Spaniard, naturalized an Englishman by the guineas of his new countrymen. What do you say to it, Aramis?"

"The plan of establishing ourselves at the house of Senor Perez appears so reasonable to me," said Aramis, "that I at once adopt it. We will invoke the memory of poor de Winter, for whom he appeared to have a great veneration—we will tell him that we are arrived as amateurs, to see all that is passing—we will each of us spend a guinea a day at his house; and, by means of these precautions, I believe that we may remain without danger or difficulty."

"But you forget one precaution, Aramis, and that a very material one."

"What is it?"

"To change our dress."

"Bah!" said Porthos, "why should we do so, when we are so much at our ease in these?"

"That we may not be discovered," said d'Artagnan. "Our dress has a cut, and that uniformity of colour, which at first sight denotes the Frenchman. Now, I am not so devoted to the cut of my doublet, or the colour of my breeches, as to incur the risk of being hung at Tyburn, or sent to take a turn in the Indies, out of affection for them. I will therefore go and buy me a marrow-coloured dress. I have remarked that all these imbecile Puritans are passionately fond of that colour."

"But can you find this man?" said Aramis.

"Yes, certainly," replied Athos. "He lived at the Bedford Tavern, Greenhall-street; besides, I could go through the city with my eyes blindfolded."

"I wish that we were already there," said d'Artagnan; "and my opinion is that we ought to reach London before daylight, even if we foundered our horses by the journey."

"Come along, then," said Athos; "for if I am right in my

calculations, we cannot be more than eight or ten leagues from it."

The friends pushed forward, and reached London about five in the morning. At the gate by which they entered, they were stopped; but Athos affirmed, in excellent English, that they had been sent forward by Colonel Harrison, to inform his colleague, M. Pridge, of the king's approach. This produced some questions respecting the king's capture, of which Athos gave such precise particulars, that, if the guards had entertained any suspicions, they must have been completely dissipated. The four friends were therefore admitted into the city, with many Puritan congratulations.

Athos had spoken truly. He went straight to the Bedford Tavern, and made himself known to the host, who was so delighted on finding him return with such a splendid party, that he immediately ordered his best rooms to be prepared for them.

Athough daylight had not yet appeared, our four travellers, on reaching London, found the whole town in commotion. The report that the king was approaching the metropolis, in the custody of Colonel Harrison, had been circulated the evening before, and many people had not even gone to bed, apprehensive that the Stuart, as they termed him, might arrive during the night, without their being present to witness his entrance.

The project of changing their dress had, as we have said, been unanimously adopted, saving a slight opposition from Porthos. They therefore proceeded to put it into execution. The host sent for clothes of every description, as if he wished to replenish his wardrobe. Athos chose a dark suit, that gave him the appearance of an honest citizen; Aramis, who did not wish to give up his sword, selected a dark-green dress, of military cut; Porthos was seduced by a red doublet and green breeches; whilst d'Artagnan, whose colour had been before settled, had only to determine the shade; and, under the peculiar dress, which he fancied, looked exactly like a retired grocer.

As for Grimaud and Mousqueton, not being in livery, they were sufficiently disguised. Besides, Grimaud was a very good specimen of the calm, dry, still, and cautious Englishman; whilst Mousque-

ton presented as good a sample of the portly, bloated, indolent denizen of the same country.

"Now," said d'Artagnan, "let us proceed to the principal point —let us cut our hair, that we may not be insulted by the populace. Being no longer gentlemen by our swords, let us be Puritans by our head-dress. It is, as you are aware, the important point that distinguishes the covenanter from the cavalier."

On this important point, however, d'Artagnan found Aramis very restive. He wished, at all hazards, to retain his hair, which was very handsome, and of which he took infinite care, and it was necessary for Athos, to whom all such things were indifferent, to set him the example. Porthos, without hesitation, abandoned his head-piece to Mousqueton, who mercilessly sheared away his thick strong locks. D'Artagnan cut for himself a fantastic head, hich was not a bad resemblance to the medals of the time of Francis I., or Charles IX.

"We are positively hideous," said Athos.

"It appears to me that we smell most fearfully of puritanism," said Aramis.

"My head is monstrously cold," said Porthos.

"I feel a great inclination to preach," said d'Artagnan.

"Now," said Athos, "as we should not know ourselves, and consequently have no fear of being recognised by others, let us go and witness the king's entrance. If he has travelled throughout the night, he cannot now be far from London."

In fact, the four friends had not mingled with the crowd more than two hours, before loud cries, and a vast movement, announced Charles's arrival. A carriage had been sent to meet him; and when far distant, the gigantic Porthos, who overtopped every one by a head, announced that he saw the cavalcade approaching. D'Artagnan raised himself on his toes; whilst Athos and Aramis listened to catch the general opinions of the populace. The carriage passed, and d'Artagnan perceived Harrison at one door, and Mordaunt at the other. As for the people, whose sentiments Athos and Aramis were anxious to learn, they sent forth violent imprecations against Charles. Athos returned in utter despair.

"My dear fellow," said d'Artagnan, "you distress yourself in vain, and I protest that I consider the position of affairs very desperate. For my part, I only attach myself to the cause for your sake, and from a certain artistical interest in the politics of it, *à la Mousquetaire*. I think it would be an exceedingly pleasant thing to snatch their prey from these bawlers, and to hold them up to derision. I will think about it."

On the morrow, whilst looking out of his window, which faced the most populous parts of the city, Athos heard the parliamentary decree proclaimed, that ordered Charles to be placed at the bar on a charge of treason and abuse of power.

D'Artagnan was near him, Aramis was looking over a map; Porthos was wholly absorbed in the last delicacies of a savoury breakfast.

"The parliament!" exclaimed Athos. "It is impossible that the parliament can have passed such a bill."

At this moment the host made his appearance. Athos beckoned to him to draw near.

"Has the parliament passed this bill?" demanded Athos, in English.

"Yes, my lord—the purified parliament."

"What do you mean by that? Are there two parliaments?"

"My friend," said d'Artagnan, "as I do not understand English, and as we all understand Spanish, do us the kindness to converse with us in that language, which is your own, and which, consequently, you must speak with pleasure when you find an opportunity."

"Ah, excellent!" said Aramis.

As for Porthos, all his attention, as we have said, was concentrated on a cotelet, which he was engaged in depriving of its most succulent parts.

"You inquired then——?" said the host, in Spanish

"I asked," said Athos, in the same language, "if there were two parliaments—one pure, and the other corrupt?"

"Oh, how strange it is!" said Porthos, gently raising his head,

and looking at the friends with an air of astonishment. "I understand English now—I comprehend what you say!"

"It is because we are speaking Spanish, my dear, friend," said Athos, with his usual coolness.

"Oh, the plague!" said Porthos, "I am sorry for it, it would have given me one more language."

"When I say the pure parliament, senor," replied the host, "I speak of that which Colonel Pridge has purified."

"Well, really," said d'Artagnan. "these people are mighty ingenious. I must give M. Mazarin and the coadjutor a hint about this on my return to France. The one will purify in the name of the court, and the other in the name of the people; so that there will no longer be any parliament at all."

"And who is this Colonel Pridge?" demanded Aramis; "and what method has he taken to purify the parliament?"

"Colonel Pridge," answerd the Spaniard, "is an old carter, and a man of considerable talent, who had made one observation whilst driving his wagon; which was, that when he met with a stone on the road it was easier work to remove it, than to make his wheels pass over it. Now, of the two hundred and fifty-one members who composed the parliament, a hundred and ninety-one annoyed him, and might have overturned his political wagon. He therefore, took them, as he formerly took the stones, and threw them out of the chamber."

"Very pretty!" said d'Artagnan, who, himself a man of talent, always admired it in another person.

"And were all these ejected members the followers of the Stuart?" demanded Athos.

"Certainly, senor; and you understand that they would have saved the king."

"Zounds!" said Porthos, majestically, "they constituted the majority."

"And do you think that he will consent to appear before such a tribunal?" said Aramis.

"He must," replied the Spaniard. "Should he refuse, the people would compel him."

"Thank you, Master Perez," said Athos: "I am now sufficiently instructed."

"Do you, at last, begin to believe that the cause is lost, Athos," said d'Artagnan, "and that, with the Harrisons, Joyces, Pridges, and Cromwells, we shall never arrive at its climax?"

"The king will be given up to the tribunal," said Athos; "but even the silence of his partisans, proves that some plot is hatching."

"D'Artagnan shrugged his shoulders.

"But," said Aramis, "if they dare to condemn their king, they will sentence him to banishment or imprisonment; that is all."

D'Artagnan whistled his little air of incredulity.

"We shall see," said Athos, "for we shall witness the trial, I presume."

"You will not have long to wait," said the host, "for it takes place to-morrow."

"Ah!" exclaimed Athos, "then the indictment was prepared before the king was taken?"

"Doubtless it was framed on the very day that the king was bought," said d'Artagnan.

"You know," replied Aramis, "that it was our friend Mordaunt who made, if not the actual bargain, at any rate the first overtures towards this little transaction."

"You know," said d'Artagnan, "that wherever he may come under my hand, I mean to kill that M. Mordaunt."

"Fie, then!" said Athos—"such a wretch as that!"

"But it is precisely because he is a wretch, that I shall kill him," rejoined d'Artagnan. "Ah! my dear friend, I yield sufficiently to your wishes, to make you indulgent to mine. Besides, once for all, whether it pleases you or not, I declare that this Mordaunt shall only be killed by me."

"And by me," said Porthos.

"And by me," said Aramis.

"Touching unanimity!" exclaimed d'Artagnan, "and which exactly suits good citizens, like ourselves. Come, let us take a

turn in the town. Mordaunt himself would not know us four yards off, in this mist. Come, let us go and drink a little mist."

"Yes," said Porthos, "it will be a nice change from the beer."

And the four friends went out to take, as is commonly said, the air of the country.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE TRIAL.

The next day a numerous guard conducted Charles I. before the high tribunal which was assembled to try him.

The crowd took possession of the streets and houses adjoining the palace; therefore, at their very outset, the progress of the four friends was obstructed by the almost insurmountable obstacle of this living wall. Some of the common people, robust and surly, pushed Aramis so rudely, that Porthos raised his formidable fist, and let it fall upon the farinaceous countenance of a baker, which immediately changed its colour, and was covered with blood, squashed as it was like a bunch of ripe grapes. This caused some commotion, and three men rushed at Porthos; but Athos removed one, and d'Artagnan another, whilst Porthos threw the third over his head. Some Englishmen, who were lovers of the pugilistic art, admired the rapid and easy manner in which this manœuvre had been executed, and began to clap their hands. Therefore, instead of being knocked down, as they began to fear they should be, Porthos and his friends narrowly escaped being carried in triumph; but our four friends, who dreaded everything that might make them conspicuous, managed to withdraw themselves from the ovation. Nevertheless, they gained one advantage by this herculean demonstration: the crowd at once opened a passage before them, and they made their way to the palace.

All London was pressing towards the doors leading to the galleries. Therefore, when the four friends succeeded in penetrating into one of them, they found the three first benches already occupied.

This was no great evil to people who wished to avoid observation. They therefore took their places, very well satisfied at having secured even these. Porthos, however, who much wished to display his red doublet and green breeches, lamented that he was not in the first rank.

The benches were disposed amphitheatrically, and, from their situation, the four friends commanded all the assemblage. By chance, they were exactly in the middle of the gallery, and directly opposite the seat that had been prepared for the king.

About eleven o'clock in the morning, the king appeared at the door of the hall. He entered, surrounded by guards, but covered; and, with a calm air, he cast a glance full of confidence all around, as if he had come to preside over an assembly of his obedient subjects, and not to respond to the accusations of a rebellious court.

The judges, proud of having a king to humble, were evidently prepared to make use of the right that they had arrogated to themselves. Consequently, an usher went to tell Charles that it was the custom for the accused to be uncovered in the presence of his judges.

Charles, without answering, fixed his hat more firmly on his head, which he turned in another direction. Then, when the usher had retired, he seated himself on the chair prepared for him, opposite the president, tapping his boot with a small rod that he held in his hand. Parry, who accompanied him, stood behind him.

D'Artagnan, instead of looking at all this ceremonial, was observing Athos, whose countenance seemed to reflect all those emotions which the king, from the great power he exerted over his feelings, managed to banish from his own. This agitation of Athos, a man so cold and calm, alarmed d'Artagnan.

"I hope," said he to him in a whisper, "that you will take a lesson from his majesty, and not get us foolishly killed in this cage."

"Do not disturb yourself," said Athos.

"Ah!" continued d'Artagnan, "it appears as if they were afraid of something; for see, they are doubling the guards, who, before, were only armed with their partisans, but now there are muskets

There is something now for everybody: the partisans are for the auditors on the floor, the muskets are intended for us above here."

"Thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, seventy men," said Porthos, counting those who had just arrived.

"Ah!" said Aramis, "you forget the officer, Porthos; and yet I think that he is worth counting."

"Yes, indeed," said d'Artagnan. And he turned pale with anger, for he had discovered Mordaunt, who, with his sword drawn, led the armed soldiers behind the king, that is to say, opposite the galleries.

"Can he have discovered us?" continued d'Artagnan. "In that case I would beat a retreat—I am not at all ambitious of having a particular mode of death imposed upon me, and have a great desire to make my own choice in that respect. Now, I should not choose to be shot in a box."

"No," said Aramis, "he has not seen us: he only sees the king. Zounds! how the insolent rascal stares at him! Can he hate him as much as he hates us?"

"No, no!" said Athos; "we only deprived him of his mother, but the king has despoiled him of his name and fortune."

"That is true," said Aramis. "But silence: the speaker is now going to speak to the king."

"In fact, at this moment the speaker, Bradshaw, thus addressed the accused monarch:—

"Stuart," said he, "listen to the names of your judges, of which the list is just going to be called over, and make any observations to the court that you may desire."

The king, as if these words had not been addressed to him, turned his head the other way.

The president waited, but as there was no reply, a moment's silence followed.

Of the hundred and sixty-three members upon the list, only seventy-three answered; the others, unwilling to participate in such an act, had absented themselves.

"I proceed to call them over," said Bradshaw, without regarding the absence of three-fifths of the assembly.

And he began to name successively the members present and absent. Those present answered in a loud or gentle voice, according to the degree of confidence which each felt in his own opinion. A short silence always succeeded the names of the absent, which were repeated twice. The name of Colonel Fairfax came in its turn, and was followed by one of those moments of brief but solemn silence that announced the absence of those members who did not wish to take a personal share in this trial.

"Colonel Fairfax?" repeated Bradshaw.

"Fairfax?" responded a voice of mockery, whose silvery tone denoted it to be that of a woman: "he has too much sense to be here."

These words, pronounced with that audacity which women derive from their weakness—a weakness that relieves them all fears of vengeance—produced an immense burst of laughter.

"It is a woman's voice!" exclaimed Aramis. "Ah, faith, I would give a good deal to know if she were young and pretty." And he mounted one of the seats to endeavour to see into the gallery whence the voice had issued.

Upon my soul," said Aramis, "she is charming! Observe, d'Artagnan, everybody is looking at her; and, in spite of Bradshaw's frown, she has not even turned pale."

"It is Lady Fairfax herself," said d'Artagnan. "Do you not remember, Porthos, that we saw her, with her husband, at General Cromwell's?"

After a short interval, the tranquillity, which had been interrupted by this strange episode, was restored, and Bradshaw resumed his operations.

"These rascals will raise the sitting, when they perceive that they are not sufficiently numerous," said the Count de la Fère.

"You do not know them, Athos. Observe Mordaunt's smile, and see how he looks at the king. Is that the look of a man who fears that his victim will escape him? No, no! It is the look of gratified hatred—of revenge, confident of satiating itself. Ah! cursed basilisk! it will be a happy day for me when I cross something else besides a look with thee!"

"The king is really handsome," said Porthos; "and see, although he is a prisoner, how carefully he is dressed. The plume in his hat is worth at least fifty pistoles. Look there, Aramis."

The list being finished, the speaker gave orders to proceed to the accusation.

Athos turned pale: he was again deceived in his expectation. Although the judges were deficient in number, the accusation was about to be entered upon. The king was therefore condemned beforehand.

"I told you so, Athos," said d'Artagnan, shrugging his shoulders, "but you are still incredulous. Now muster all your courage, and listen, without being too irate, I beseech you, to the despicable enormities that this gentleman in black is about to say to his king, with all license and privilege."

In fact, never did a more brutal accusation—never did more contemptible abuse—never did a more cruel inquisition, dishonour regal majesty. Before that time, they had been content merely to assassinate kings; at least, it was only on their dead bodies that insults were lavished.

Charles listened to the speech of the accuser with great attention, disregarding the abuse, dwelling on the complaints; and when the hatred boiled over too much—when the accuser made himself the executioner by anticipation, he answered by a smile of contempt. It was, after all, a terrible situation, where the unfortunate king found every act of imprudence changed into a wilful deed—every error transformed to a crime.

D'Artagnan, who permitted all this torrent of abuse to roll along with the feeling of disdain that it merited, fixed his judicious mind on some of the real charges of the accuser. "The fact is," said he, "if imprudence and carelessness are punishable, this poor king merits some penalty. But it seems to me, that what he now suffers is sufficiently severe."

"After all," replied Aramis, "the punishment cannot fall upon the king, but upon his ministers; since the fundamental law of the English constitution is, that *the king can do no wrong.*"

"For my part," thought Porthos, looking at Mordaunt, and

occupying himself with him alone, "if it were not for disturbing the gravity of the occasion, I would jump down from the gallery, and in three bounds I would reach Mordaunt, whom I would strangle. I would then take him by the feet, and knock down all those wretched musketeers, who are mere caricatures of the French musketeers; and in the meantime d'Artagnan, who is full of ready wit, would perhaps find some means of saving the king. I really must talk to him about it."

As for Athos, with inflamed countenance, and fists clenched, he was foaming with rage at this unremitting parliamentary abuse, and the untired forbearance of the king; and that iron arm and indomitable heart, were changed into a trembling hand, and a shuddering frame.

At this moment the accuser finished his speech with these words: —"The present accusation is brought forward by us in the name of the English people."

There was a murmur in the galleries at these words; and another voice, not that of a woman, but of a man, strong and furious, thundered behind d'Artagnan—"Thou liest! and nine-tenths of the people of England are horror-struck by thy words!"

This voice was that of Athos, who, utterly conquered by his feelings, and standing up, with his hand extended, thus addressed the public accuser.

At this apostrophe, king, judges, spectators, all turned their eyes towards the gallery where the four friends were seated. Mordaunt did the same, and recognised Athos, around whom his three friends were standing, pale and threatening. His eyes flashed with joy: he had discovered those to whose detection and death he had consecrated his life. A furious gesture collected twenty of his musketeers around him, and pointing to the gallery, where he saw his enemies, "Fire on that gallery," he exclaimed.

But, rapid as thought, d'Artagnan had seized Athos round the middle, Porthos doing the same with Aramis, and jumping down from the benches, they rushed into the passage, hastily descended the stairs, and were speedily lost amid the crowd; whilst, in the interior of the hall, the lowered muskets threatened three thousand

spectators, whose noisy fears and cries for mercy arrested the orders that had been given for massacre.

Charles had also recognised the four Frenchmen. He placed one hand on his heart to stay its beatings, and the other over his eyes, that he might not see the murder of his faithful friends.

Mordaunt, pale, and trembling with rage, rushed out of the hall sword in hand, with ten halberdiers, searched the crowd, interrogating and breathing vengeance; but at last he returned, without having discovered those he sought.

The confusion was indescribable. More than half an hour elapsed before any one could be heard. The judges thought every gallery would thunder forth its voice. The galleries still saw the muskets pointed at them, and, divided between fear and curiosity, remained disturbed and agitated. At length calm was restored.

"What have you to say in your defence?" said Bradshaw to the king.

Then, in the accent of a judge, and not of a criminal, and with head covered, he arose, without any indication of humility, but with an air of command:

"Before interrogating," said Charles, "answer me. At Newcastle, I was free, and there I concluded a treaty with the parliament. Instead of observing your part of that treaty, as I performed mine, you purchased me from the Scots—not for much, I know, but that does credit to the economy of your government. But, because you paid the price of a slave for me, do you therefore imagine that I have ceased to be your king? No. To answer you, would be to acknowledge that this is the case: I will not therefore answer you, until you have established your right to interrogate me. To answer, would be to acknowledge you as my judges; and I only recognise you as my executioners."

And in the midst of profound silence, Charles, calm, haughty, and with his head still covered, resumed his seat.

"Oh, that my Frenchmen were there!" murmured the king proudly, as he turned towards the gallery, where they had appeared for an instant: "they would see that their friend was worthy of being defended whilst living, and lamented when dead."

But in vain did his eyes seek to penetrate into the depths of the crowd, and ask of heaven the slight consolation of their presence: he discovered nothing but dull and fearful countenances, and he felt that he was engaged in a deadly contest against hatred and ferocity.

"Well, then," said the president, seeing that Charles was thoroughly determined to be silent, "so be it: we will judge you in spite of you silence. Your are accused of treason, of abuse of power, and of murder. The testimony is credible. Go, then; and a future sitting shall effect what you refuse to agree to in this."

Charles arose, and turning towards Parry, whom he saw pale, and dissolved in tears—"Well now, my good Parry," said he, "what can agitate you so much?"

"Oh, sire!" said Parry, in a supplicating voice—"Sire, on leaving the hall, do not look to the left!"

"And why not, Parry?"

"Do not look, I beseech your majesty!"

"But what is the matter? Speak," said Charles, endeavouring to look beyond the line of soldiers who were stationed behind him.

"It is—but you will not look, will you, sire?—it is, that they have laid upon a table the axe with which they execute criminals. This is a hideous sight: do not look at it sire, I beseech you!"

"The fools!" said Charles: "do they think that I am as cowardly as themselves? You did well to tell me of this. Thank you, Parry."

And the king left the hall, following his guards.

To the left of the door there actually gleamed with ill-omened light, reflected from the red cloth on which it rested, the white axe, with its long handle polished by the grasp of the executioner. On arriving opposite to it, Charles stopped, and turning with a smile—

"Ah!" said he, laughing, "the axe! An ingenious bugbear, worthy of those who are incapable of estimating the feelings of a gentleman. Thou dost not frighten me, thou axe of an executioner," he continued, striking it with the slender rod he held in his

hand, "and I strike thee, waiting patiently, and like a Christian, until thou shalt return the blow."

And shrugging his shoulders with regal disdain, he continued his course; leaving those quite stupefied who had pressed round the table, to see what effect the sight of that axe, which was soon to separate his head from his body, would have on the royal countenance.

"Really," said the king to Parry, "these people seem to take me for some mere Indian cotton merchant, and not for a gentleman accustomed to see the steel flash. Do they imagine that I am not equal to a butcher?"

As he said these words, he reached the door. A vast concourse of people had collected, who had been unable to gain admission to the galleries, and who were resolved at least to see the end of the spectacle, as they had been deprived of its most interesting part. This vast throng, whose ranks were thickly sprinkled with threatening countenances, extracted a slight sigh from the king.

"What an immense number of people," thought he: "and not one friend amongst them all!"

Whilst mentally uttering these words of doubt and despondency, a voice, quite close to him, as if responding to his thoughts, said—"Health to fallen majesty!"

The king turned his head briskly, with tears in his eyes. It was an old soldier of his guards, who did not wish to see his captive king pass so near him, without paying him his last homage. But instantaneously the unhappy wretch was nearly demolished by blows; and amongst those who struck him, the king perceived Groslow.

"Alas!" said Charles, "it was a severe punishment, for a very slight offence."

Then, with his heart overflowing, he continued his course; but he had not proceeded a hundred paces, before a furious wretch, leaning forward between two soldiers, spat in the king's face, as the infamous and accursed Jew formerly spat in the face of Jesus of Nazareth.

Violent bursts of laughter, mingled with hoarse murmurs, followed this dastardly act. The crowd separated, again rushed together,

waved to and fro like the billows of a tempestuous sea, and the king fancied that he saw the sparkle of Athos's eye in the midst of this living surge.

Charles wiped his face, and said, with a melancholy smile, "the poor wretch! for half a crown, he would do the same to his father."

The king was not mistaken. He had indeed seen Athos and his friends, who had again mingled with the crowd, and followed the royal martyr with one last lingering look.

When the soldier saluted Charles, Athos's heart melted with joy; and when the unfortunate man recovered his senses, he found ten guineas in his pocket, which the French gentleman had slipped into it. But when the cowardly scoffer spat in the face of the royal prisoner, Athos put his hand to his dagger.

D'Artagnan arrested that hand, and said in a hoarse voice, "Wait!"

Athos paused.

D'Artagnan put his arm into that of Athos, made a sign to Porthos and Aramis not to lose sight of them, and placed himself behind the man with naked arms, who was still laughing at his infamous pleasantry, and whom some others, as violent as himself, were still congratulating.

This man then went his way towards the city. D'Artagnan, leaning still on Athos's arm, followed him, making a sign to Porthos and Aramis to keep them in sight. The man, who appeared to be a butcher's assistant, with two companions, went down towards the river, by a small, steep, solitary street. D'Artagnan had now relinquished Athos's arm, and walked just behind the scoffer. When they approached the river, these three men perceived that they were followed. They stopped, and looking insolently at the Frenchmen, exchanged some jokes amongst themselves.

"I do not understand English, Athos," said d'Artagnan; "but you do, and must therefore be my interpreter."

And at these words, quickening his pace, he passed the three men; but turning almost immediately, he went up to the butcher, who stopped, and touching him on the breast, with the tip of his fore-

finger—"Repeat what I say to him, Athos," he said to his friend:—"Thou hast behaved like a coward, thou hast insulted a defenceless man, thou hast polluted the face of thy king, and thou must die!—"

Athos, pale as a spectre, and whom d'Artagnan held by the hand, translated these strange words to the man, who, seeing the sinister preparations, and d'Artagnan's terrible eye, wished to defend himself Aramis at this movement put his hand to his sword.

"No, not the sword—not the sword!" said d'Artagnan; the sword is for gentlemen." And seizing the butcher by the throat—"Porthos," said d'Artagnan, "annihilate this wretch for me, with one blow of your fist."

Porthos raised his terrible arm, made it whistle through the air like the whirl of a sling, and the heavy mass fell with a dull sound on the coward's neck, which it broke. The man fell' as an ox falls under the hammer. His companions wished to call out, and to fly, but their tongues clove to their mouths, and their trembling limbs refused their office.

"Tell them, moreover, Athos," said d'Artagnan, "Thus shall die all those who forget that a prisoner is sacred, and that a captive monarch is doubly the representative of the Almighty."

Athos repeated these words.

The two men, in mute terror and with bristling hair, gazed at their companion's body, which was swimming in streams of black blood.

Then recovering both their voices and their strength, they fled with a scream, clasping their hands together.

"Justice is satisfied," said Porthos, wiping his forehead.

"And now," said d'Artagnan, to Athos, "do not doubt me, and be perfectly easy in your mind. I undertake everything concerning the king."

CHAPTER XXIII.

WHITEHALL.

The parliament, as was easily foreseen, condemned Charles Stuart to death. Political trials are generally mere vain formalities; for the same passions that produce the accusation, also lead to the condemnation. Such is the terrible logic of revolutions.

Although our friends expected this condemnation, it yet overwhelmed them with sorrow. D'Artaguan, whose mind was never so full of resources as in extreme cases, swore afresh that he would try every possible method to prevent the catastrophe of this bloody tragedy. But what were these methods to be? They were as yet but dimly perceptible to his mind. Everything must depend upon circumstances; and, until a complete plan could be arranged, it was necessary, at all hazards, in order to gain time, to place some obstacle in the way of the execution taking place on the following day, as had been resolved upon by the judges. The only apparent method was to remove the London executioner; since, if he were away, the sentence could not be carried into effect. Doubtless one would be procured from the nearest provincial town; but even thus, one day at least would be gained, and one day in such a case might possibly produce safety. D'Artagnan undertook this more than difficult task.

Another point, not less essential, was to apprise Charles that an attempt would be made to rescue him, in order that he might, as far as he could, second the efforts of his friends, or, at any rate, might do nothing to impede them. Aramis charged himself with this perilous office. The king had requested that Bishop Juxon might visit him in his prison at Whitehall; and Mordaunt had even gone the same evening to the bishop, to apprise him of the king's pious wish, as also of Cromwell's permission. Aramis therefore resolved to obtain from the bishop, either by persuasion or fear, his consent to go in his stead, and attired in his sacerdotal habiliments, to the palace of Whitehall.

And, at length, Athos engaged to prepare means for quitting England, whether in the event of failure or of success.

The evening being come, they appointed to meet at their hotel at eleven o'clock, and each set off to execute his own share of their dangerous project.

The palace of Whitehall was guarded by three regiments of cavalry, and more than all by the incessant and anxious watchfulness of Cromwell, who kept going backwards and forwards, and sending his officers and agents.

Alone, and in his accustomed chamber, illumined by two wax lights, the condemned monarch was sorrowfully looking back upon the luxury of his past grandeur, which, at the last hour of life, appears more brilliant and sweeter than ever. Parry had not left his master, and, since his condemnation, had scarcely ceased to weep.

Charles, leaning on a table, was gazing upon a medallion which bore the portraits of his wife and daughter. He was expecting, first, Juxon, and then martyrdom. Sometimes his thoughts reverted to those brave French gentlemen, who already seemed separated a hundred leagues from him, and as if fabulous or chimerical, like those visions of sleep that disappear on waking. Charles did, in fact, ask himself, whether all was not a dream, or at any rate a delirium of fever.

At this thought, he rose up, took a few steps to rouse himself from his torpor, and approached the window, beneath which he saw the muskets of the guards shining. Then he was compelled to confess to himself that he was awake, and that, instead of a cruel dream, it was a stern reality. He returned in silence to his seat, again leant upon the table, resting his head upon his hand, and was soon absorbed in deep thought.

"Alas!" said he to himself, "if I had for my confessor one of those luminaries of the church whose soul has fathomed all the mysteries of life, and all the littleness of grandeur, perhaps his voice would stifle that whisper that mourns in my soul! But I shall have a priest of a vulgar soul, whose career and fortune may haply have been shattered by my misfortunes. He will talk to me of God, and

of death, as he has talked to other dying persons, without comprehending that the king whom he addresses, leaves his throne to an usurper, whilst his children are without bread." Then raising the portrait to his lips, he murmured successively the names of each of his children.

The night, as we have said, was dark and gloomy. The clock of the neighbouring church slowly struck. The pale light of the the two candles, diffused throughout the large and lofty chamber, conjured forth strange reflections, and dimly-illumined phantoms. These phantoms were the ancestors of the king, who appeared to start from their gilded frames, and were reflected by the last blue and fitful gleams of a fast-fading charcoal fire. A deep and profound melancholy weighed down the monarch's heart. He buried his head between his hands, thought of that world, so beautiful when we are about to leave it, or rather, when it is about to leave us—of the caresses of his children, at all times so sweet and gentle, but which seem doubly dear when one is separated from them, never to meet again—and then of his wife, that noble and courageous creature, who had sustained him to the last moment. He drew from his bosom the diamond cross, and the star of the garter, that she had sent by the generous Frenchmen, and kissed them; and then, as he thought that she would not again see these objects until he was laid, cold and mutilated, in the tomb, he felt those icy tremors run through his frame, which death throws over us as his first mantle.

Then again, in this chamber, that recalled so many royal memorials, and where he had been surrounded by so many courtiers, and so much flattery, he was now alone, with only one servant, who had lost all hope, and whose feeble soul was utterly incapable of sustaining his own sorrows. Influenced by the darkness, and the winter's dreary cold, Charles allowed his courage to fall to the level of this weakness; and the same king, who died with the smile of resignation on his lips, secretly wiped up a tear that had fallen upon the table.

Suddenly, footsteps were heard in the passage, the door opened, torches filled the room with a smoky light, and an ecclesiastic entered, clothed in his episcopal robes, and followed by two guards,

to whom Charles made an imperious sign. The guards retired, and the room again became obscure.

"Juxon!" exclaimed Charles; "Juxon! thank you, my last friend; you are come just in time."

The bishop cast a significant and anxious glance at the man who was sobbing in the corner of the room.

"Come, Parry," said the king, "do not weep, for God has at length visited us."

"If it is Parry," said the bishop, "I have nothing to fear. Therefore, sire, permit me to salute your majesty, and to tell you who I am, and why I am come."

At this sight, and this voice, Charles would doubtless have uttered an exclamation; but Aramis put his finger to his lips, and made a profound bow to the king.

"The chevalier!" murmured Charles.

"Yes, sire," said Aramis, raising his voice; "yes, Bishop Juxon, Christ's faithful soldier, who obeys your majesty's command."

Charles clasped his hands. He had recognised d'Herblay, and was utterly confounded by the unceasing devotion of these men, who, as strangers, and without any other motive than a duty imposed on them by their own consciences, continued to struggle against the will of a people, and the destiny of a king."

"You!" he exclaimed: "you! How did you penetrate so far? My God! if you are discovered, you will be lost!"

"Do not waste a thought upon me, sire," said Aramis, still recommending silence; "think of yourself alone: your friends, as you may perceive, are on the alert. What we can accomplish, I know not as yet; but four determined men can do a great deal. In the meantime, do not close an eye to-night: be not surprised at anything, and expect everything."

Charles shook his head. "My friend," said he, "are you aware that you have no time to lose, and that whatever you propose to do, must be done very quickly? I am to die at ten o'clock to-morrow?"

"Sire, something will happen before that time, which will render the execution impossible."

The king regarded Aramis with astonishment.

At this moment was heard, under the king's window, a strange noise, resembling that produced by unloading timber from a wagon.

"Do you hear?" said the king.

The noise was followed by a cry of pain.

"I hear," said Aramis, "but I do not understand the noise, nor the meaning of that cry."

"I do not know who uttered the cry," said the king; "but I can inform you what is meant by the noise. Do you know that I am to be executed outside of this window?" said Charles, extending his hand towards the gloomy and deserted square, peopled only by soldiers and sentinels.

"Yes, sire," said Aramis, "I know it."

"Well, this timber that they are unloading, is the beams and planks with which they are about to erect the scaffold. Some workman must have been injured whilst unloading them."

Aramis shuddered, in spite of himself.

"You may therefore clearly see," continued Charles, "that it is useless for you to persist any longer. I am condemned, and must submit to my fate."

"Sire," said Aramis, resuming that tranquillity which had for a moment been disturbed, "they may erect a scaffold, but they cannot find an executioner!"

"What do you mean?" demanded the king.

"That, at this very moment, the executioner is either carried off or corrupted. To-morrow, the scaffold will be ready, but there will be no executioner: the execution will therefore be deferred till the following day."

"Well, what then?" said the king.

"Well, then, replied Aramis, "to-morrow night we shall carry you off!"

"How so?" exclaimed the king, whose countenance was involuntarily illumined with a gleam of joy.

"Oh, sir," murmured Parry, with hands clasped, "may you be blessed, both you and yours."

"But how so?" repeated the king: "I ought to know, that, if necessary, I may second your efforts."

"I have not yet the slightest conception, sire," replied Aramis. "I only know that the most skilful, the most brave, and the most devoted of our party said, on leaving me, 'Chevalier, tell the king, that to-morrow, at ten o'clock at night, we shall carry him off. And, as he has said it, he will do it."

"Tell me the name of this generous friend," said the king, "that, whether he succeeds or not, I may cherish for him an eternal gratitude."

"D'Artagnan, sire—the same who was on the point of saving you, when Colonel Harrison entered so inopportunely."

"You are really wonderful men," said the king. "Had I been merely told of such things, I could not have believed them."

"Now, sire," continued Aramis, "listen to me. Do not forget for one single moment, that we are watching for your safety. The slightest gesture, the most trifling sign of those who may approach you—watch everything, listen to everything, remark everything."

"Oh, chevalier!" cried the king, "what can I say to you? No words can express my gratitude. Should you succeed, I will not tell you that you will save a king—no, in sight of the scaffold, royalty is, I swear, of little value in my eyes—but you will preserve a husband for his wife, a father for his children. Chevalier, take my hand: it is that of a friend, who will love you till he breathes his last sigh."

Aramis wished to kiss the king's hand, but Charles seized his, and pressed it to his heart.

At this moment a man entered, without even knocking at the door. Aramis wished to withdraw his hand, but the king retained it. He who entered was one of those Puritans—half priest, half soldier—many of whom sprouted up near Cromwell.

"What do you want, sir?" said the king.

"I wish to know whether Charles Stuart's confession is finished," said the intruder.

"What does that signify to you?" said the king: "we are not of the same religion."

"All men are brothers," said the Puritan. "One of my brethren will soon die, and I am come to exhort him to die properly."

"Enough," said Parry. "The king has nothing to do with your exhortations."

"Sire," said Aramis, in a low tone, "humour him: he is doubtless some spy."

"After the reverend bishop," said the king, "I will hear you with pleasure, sir."

The man left the room with a scowling look, but not without regarding Juxon with an earnestness that did not escape the king's notice.

"Chevalier," said he, when the door was closed, "I believe that you were right, and that this man came here with bad intentions. Take care, when you retire, that some misfortune does not befal you."

"I thank your majesty," said Aramis, "but do not distress yourself: under this robe I wear a coat of mail and a dagger

"Go, then, sir, and may God take you under his sacred protection."

Aramis left the room, being conducted to the threshold by Charles himself. Distributing his blessings as he proceeded, he passed majestically through the ante chambers, filled with soldiers, re-entered his carriage, into which his two guards followed him, and returned to the episcopal residence, where they left him.

Juxon was awaiting his return with extreme anxiety.

"Well?" said he, on seeing Aramis.

"Everything has succeeded as I wished," replied Aramis. "Spies, guards, followers, all took me for you; and the king blesses you, in expectation of your blessing."

"God protect you, my son; for your example has given me both hope and courage."

Aramis resumed his own dress and his cloak, and left the house, informing Juxon that he should once more have recourse to him."

Scarcely had he gone ten paces in the street, before he perceived that he was followed by a man wrapped up in a large cloak. He put his hand to his poignard, and stopped. The man came straight up to him: it was Porthos.

"My dear friend!" said Aramis, holding out his hand to him.

'You know, my dear fellow," said Porthos, "that each had his commission. "Mine was to guard you, and I was doing so. Have you seen the king?"

"Yes, and all goes on well. But where are our friends?"

"We are to meet them at the hotel, at eleven o'clock."

"Then we have no time to lose," said Aramis.

In fact, it struck half-past ten by St. Paul's. Yet, as the two friends exerted themselves, they arrived first. After them came Athos.

'Everything is going on well," said he, not giving his friends time to question him.

"What have you done?" inquired Aramis.

"I have hired a small felucca, sharp as a canoe, and swift as a swallow. It is waiting for us at Greenwich, opposite the Isle of Dogs, and is manned by a master and four men, who, in consideration of fifty pounds, will be at our disposal for three successive nights. Once on board with the king, we will take advantage of the tide, will descend the Thames, and in two hours will be at sea. Then, like true pirates, we will follow the coasts, we will nestle under the cliffs, or, if the sea be open for us, we will make for Boulogne. In case I should be killed, remember that the captain's name is Roger, and that of the vessel *l'Eclair*. By these signs you will recognise each other. A handkerchief knotted at the four corners is the signal."

A moment after, d'Artagnan returned.

"Disburden your pockets," said he, "to the amount of an hundred pounds; for as for mine—" And he turned out his own, which were quite empty.

The sum was instantly collected, and d'Artagnan left the room, but returned in a few minutes.

"There," said he, "it is accomplished, although it was not without much difficulty.

"Has the executioner left London?" demanded Athos.

"No, indeed; that would not have been safe enough: he might have passed out by one gate, and re-entered by another."

"Where is he then?" demanded Athos.

"In the cellar—in our host's cellar. Mousqueton is seated on the threshold, and here is the key."

"Bravo!" cried Aramis. "But how did you persuade this man to disappear?"

"As all the world is persuaded—by money. His consent, however, has cost me dear."

"How much has it cost you, my friend?" said Athos; "for you understand, now that we are no longer altogether poor musketeers, without hearth or dwelling, all expenses should be borne by us in common."

"It has cost me twelve thousand francs," replied d'Artagnan.

"And where did you find them?" demanded Athos. "Were you in possession of such a sum?"

"The queen's famous diamond!" said d'Artagnan with a sigh.

"Ah! that is true," said Aramis; 'I remarked it on your finger."

"You purchased it, therefore, from M. des Essarts?" said Porthos.

"Yes," replied d'Artagnan, "but it is written in heaven that I am not to keep it. Diamonds, like men, appear to have their sympathies and antipathies; and it seems that this diamond detests me."

"So far as regards the executioner," said Athos, "all is well: but, unfortunately, every executioner has his assistant, his servant, or whatever you may call him."

"And this man also had his; but there we are equally fortunate."

"How so?

"At the very moment that I imagined I had yet another bargain to make, the rascal was brought in with a broken thigh. From excess of zeal, he must needs accompany the wagon that carried the beams and planks under the king's window; and one of these beams fell upon his leg and broke it."

"Ah!" said Aramis: "then it must have been this man who uttered the cry that I heard in the king's room."

"It is probable," answerered d'Artagnan. "But, as he is a very careful man, he promised, as he was carried away, to send in his place, four expert and skilful workmen, to assist those who are already engaged; and on returning to his master's, wounded as he was, he instantly wrote to Master Tom Low, a carpenter of his acquaintance, to betake himself to Whitehall. Here is the letter, which he sent by a messenger, who gave it to me for a louis."

"And what use do you mean to make of this letter?" demanded Athos."

"Can you not guess?" said d'Artagnan, his eyes sparkling with intelligence.

"No, upon my soul."

"Well, then, my dear Athos, you, who speak English like John Bull himself—you are Master Tom Low, and we are your three companions. Do you understand now?"

Athos emitted a cry of joy and admiration, ran to a wardrobe and drew from it some workmen's dresses, which immediately covered the four friends, who instantly left the hotel, Athos carrying a saw, Porthos a crowbar, Aramis a hatchet, and d'Artagnan a hammer and nails.

The letter of the executioner's servant satisfied the master carpenter that they were really the persons he expected.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE WORKMEN.

About the middle of the night, Charles heard a tremendous noise beneath his window: it was the blows of the hammer and the hatchet, the dull sounds of the crowbar, and the creaking of the saw.

As he had thrown himself on his bed, and was just beginning to sleep, this noise awoke him with a start; and as, independent of

its actual clamour, this noise found a terrible moral echo in his soul, the frightful thoughts of the previous evening again began to assail him. Alone, opposed to darkness and desolation, he had not the courage to support this fresh torture, which he had not anticipated as a portion of his punishment. He therefore ordered Parry to request the sentinel to entreat the workmen to strike with less violence, and to pity the last sleep of him who had been their king. The sentinel did not wish to quit his post, but he allowed Parry to pass.

Having proceeded round the palace until he reached the window, Parry observed, on a level with the balcony, from which they had removed the railings, a large unfinished scaffold, over which the workmen were now beginning to fasten a drapery of black serge. This scaffold, raised to the height of the window, and about twenty feet from the ground, had two interior stages. Parry, hateful as was the sight, looked amongst the eight or ten workmen who were erecting this gloomy structure, to find those whose noise had been most unpleasant to the king; and on the upper platform he perceived two men, who, by means of a crowbar, were unfastening the last fixtures of the iron balustrade. One of them, a perfect Colossus, performed his task like one of those ancient battering rams, employed to beat down walls. At each blow of his instrument, showers of stone flew about. The other, on his knees, drew away the broken stones. It was evident that these were the men who made the noise of which the king complained. Parry therefore mounted the ladder, and went up to them.

"My friends," said he, "will you work a little more gently, I pray you? The king is weary, and is greatly in need of repose."

The man who was using the crowbar arrested his arm, and turned half round; but Parry could not distinguish his features, obscured as they were by the darkness, which was greater at the top of the scaffold. The man who was on his knees also turned; and as he was lower than his companion, and his countenance was illumined by the lantern, Parry could see him. This man looked earnestly at him, and put his finger to his lips. Parry started back in utter astonishment.

"Very well, very well," said the workman in excellent English,

"go back, and tell your king, that if he sleeps badly to-night, he will sleep better to-morrow night."

These rude words, which, in their literal sense, bore such a dreadful meaning, were received by the workmen employed on the lower stage, and around, with horrid shouts of laughter.

Parry returned, almost convinced that he was in a dream. Charles waited impatiently for him. At the moment that he entered, the sentinel put his head in at the door to see what the king was doing. Charles was on the bed, leaning on his elbow.

Parry closed the door, and going up to the king, with his countenance radiant with joy—"Sire," said he, in a low voice, "do you know who these workmen are, who are making such a noise?"

"No," said Charles, with a melancholy shake of the head: "how should I know that? How can I have any knowledge of these men?"

"Sire," answered Parry, in a still lower tone, and stooping down to his master's bed—"sire, it is the Count de la Fère and his companions."

"Who are erecting the scaffold?" said the astonished king.

"Yes; and who, whilst erecting it, are also making a hole in the wall."

"Hush!" said the king, looking fearfully around: "did you see them?"

"I spoke to them."

The king clasped his hands, and raised his eyes to heaven. Then, after a short and fervent prayer, he threw himself off his bed, and proceeded to the window, of which he removed the curtains. The sentinels were still on the balcony; beyond, a dark platform was perceptible, on which shadow-like figures were moving. Charles could distinguish nothing, but he felt under his feet the vibration of the blows which his friends were striking; and each of these blows now found a responsive chord in his heart.

Parry was not mistaken: he had really seen Athos. It was he who was engaged, with Porthos, in forming a hole in which one of the transverse beams was to rest. This hole communicated with the royal chamber by a hollow space formed under its flooring. Once in this cavity, which somewhat resembled a low intermediate story,

it would be practicable, with a crowbar, and a good pair of shoulders, (and for the latter they relied upon Porthos,) to remove a plank of the flooring. The king would then glide through this opening, and, having reached those parts of the scaffold that were covered with black cloth, would there muffle himself up in a workman's dress which they had prepared for him, and, without affectation or fear, would descend with the four friends. The sentinels, seeing only the workmen who had been labouring on the scaffold, and having no reason to suspect them, would allow them to pass. The felucca, as we have before said, was in readiness.

This plan was bold, and yet simple and easy, as all things are that spring from hardy courage.

Athos, therefore, was tearing his white and symmetrical hands by removing the stones which Porthos had removed from the wall. He could already pass his head under the architectural ornaments that decorated the lower parts of the balcony. In two hours more he would be able to pass his whole body; and before daylight, the hole would be made, and would be concealed behind the folds of an exterior covering of serge, which d'Artagnan would fix there. D'Artagnan had passed himself off as a French workman, and was fixing his nails with the regularity of a professed upholsterer. Aramis was cutting off the surplus of the serge, which hung down to the ground, and behind which the wood-work of the scaffold arose.

Daylight was just appearing on the tops of the houses. A large fire of turf and coals had enabled the workmen to pass this cold night, between the 29th and 30th of January; but every moment some even of the most diligent left off, to go and warm themselves. Athos and Porthos alone had not quitted their work. Therefore, by the first light of the morning, the opening was completed. Athos entered it, carrying with him the clothes destined for the king, wrapped up in a remnant of serge. Porthos handed him his crowbar, and d'Artagnan nailed on the exterior hanging of serge, behind which the opening, and he whom it concealed, both disappeared.

Athos required only two hours' more labour to enter into com-

munication with the king; and, from the previous arrangements of the four friends, they anticipated that they had the whole day before them; since, from the absence of the executioner, it would be necessary to send to Bristol for another.

D'Artagnan went to resume his marrow-coloured dress, and Porthos his red doublet. As for Aramis, he repaired to Juxon's, in order, if possible, to penetrate to the king's presence in his company.

All three appointed to meet in front of Whitehall, at mid-day, to observe what might be passing there.

Before he left the scaffold, Aramis went to the opening where Athos was concealed, to inform him that he was going to endeavour to see the king again.

"Adieu, then, and be of good courage," said Athos. "Tell the king the state of affairs; and say, that when he is alone he must knock on the floor, to intimate that I may safely continue my proceedings. If Parry could assist me, by unloosening the hearth-stone of the fire-place, which doubtless is a marble slab, it would be so much accomplished. You, Aramis, endeavour to remain with the king: speak loud—very loud—for you will be heard at the door. Should there be a sentinel in the room, kill him without hesitation: should there be two, Parry must kill one, and you the other: should there be three, allow yourself to be killed, but save the king."

"Do not trouble yourself about that," said Aramis. "I will take two poignards, that I may give one to Parry. Is that all?"

"Yes, go; but conjur the king not to be led away by false generosity. Should there be a combat, whilst you are fighting he must fly. The slab being replaced over his head, and you, dead or alive, on the slab, it will take at least ten minutes to find the opening by which he has escaped. During these ten minutes we shall have made some progress, and the king will be saved."

"All shall be done as you require, Athos. Your hand! for perhaps we shall never meet again."

Athos passed his arm over Aramis's neck, and embraced him.

"That is for you," said he. "Now, should I die, tell d'Artagnan that I love him as my own child, and embrace him for me. Embrace also our good and brave Porthos. Adieu!"

"Adieu!" responded Aramis. "I am now as certain that the king will escape, as that I hold the most loyal hand in the whole world."

Aramis left Athos, descended from the scaffold, and regained his hotel, whistling the air of a song in praise of Cromwell. He found his two friends established near a good fire, drinking a bottle of port wine, and devouring a cold fowl. Porthos, whilst eating, was all the time growling forth violent abuse against the infamous parliamentarians. D'Artagnan ate in silence, but his mind was actively engaged in forming the most audacious plans.

Aramis recounted everything that had been agreed upon. D'Artagnan expressed his approval by a nod, and Porthos by his voice.

"Bravo!" said he. "Besides, we shall be there at the very moment of the escape: it is very easy to conceal oneself under that scaffold, and there we can be. What with d'Artagnan, myself, Grimaud, and Mousqueton, we shall very well kill eight. I do not speak of Blaisois, as he is only fit to take care of the horses. At two minutes a man, that is four minutes; Mousqueton will lose one minute—that will make five; and during those five minutes, you can have made a quarter of a league."

Aramis hastily swallowed a mouthful of food, drank a glass of wine, and changed his dress.

"Now," said he, "I am going to the bishop's. Take care to prepare the arms, Porthos; and do you keep a good watch over your executioner, d'Artagnan."

"Be quite easy on that score. Grimaud has relieved Mousqueton, and is now stationed over him."

"Nevertheless, redouble your vigilance, and do not remain inactive one single moment."

"Inactive? My dear friend, ask Porthos: I am almost dead. I am perpetually on my legs, and have the gait of a dancing-master. Zounds! how I love France just now; and what a fine thing it is to have a country of one's own, when one gets on so badly in that of others."

Aramis left them as he left Athos—that is to say, with embracing them. He then went to Juxon's, to whom he made his request.

Juxon consented the more readily to take Aramis with him, because he had already told him that he should require a priest, as the king would certainly communicate, and probably might wish to hear a mass.

Dressed in the same robes that had been worn by Aramis on the previous evening, the bishop entered his carriage. Aramis, even more disguised by his paleness and sorrow than by his deacon's costume, followed him. The carriage arrived at Whitehall about nine o'clock. Nothing appeared changed: the antechambers and corridors were full of guards, as on the previous evening; two sentinels kept guard at the king's door; and two others marched up and down the platform of the scaffold, before the balcony, where the block was already placed.

The king was full of hope; and, on again seeing Aramis, this hope changed into joy. The bishop, in a loud voice, that all might hear, spoke of the interview he had had with the king the evening before. The king replied, that the words he had spoken at that interview had produced their effect, and that he wished for another private conversation. Juxon turned towards the attendants, and requested them to leave him with the king.

Every one retired; and, when the door was closed,

"Sire," said Aramis with great quickness, "you are safe! The London executioner has disappeared; his assistant broke his leg yesterday evening under your majesty's window, and the cry we heard proceeded from him. They have doubtless already discovered the absence of the executioner; but there is not another nearer than Bristol, and it will take some time to send for him. We have, therefore, till to-morrow, at least."

"But the Count de la Fère?" said the king.

"He is only two feet from you, sire. Take the poker, strike three blows at regular intervals, and you will hear an answer."

The king took the instrument with a trembling hand, and struck three blows at regular intervals. Instantly some blows, dull and measured, responding to the signal, were heard beneath the floor.

"Therefore," said the king, "he who answers me there—"

"Is the Count de la Fère, sire," replied Aramis. "He is pre-

paring the way by which your majesty is to escape. Parry on his side will raise that marble slab, and a passage will be completely opened."

"But," said Parry, "I have no instrument."

"Take this poignard," said Aramis, "only take care not to blunt it too much, for you may have need of it to penetrate something besides stone."

"Oh, Juxon!" said Charles, turning towards the bishop, and taking both his hands, "Juxon, remember the prayer of him who was your king!"

"Who is so still, and always will be," said Juxon, kissing the king's hand.

"Pray all your life for this gentleman, whom you see—for the other, whom you hear under our feet—and also for two others, who, wherever they may be, are, I am sure, watching over my safety."

"Sire," replied Juxon, "you shall be obeyed. Every day, as long as I live, a prayer shall be offered to God for these your majesty's faithful friends."

The miner continued his labour for some time, and he was heard drawing nearer every moment. But suddenly an unexpected noise was heard in the gallery. Aramis seized the poker, and gave the signal of interruption. This noise drew near: a number of equal and measured steps were heard. The four men remained motionless: all eyes were fixed upon the door, which opened slowly, and with an appearance of solemnity.

The guards were formed in line, in the room preceding that of the king. A parliamentary commissioner, clothed in black, and replete with an ill-assumed gravity, entered, bowed to the king, and, unfolding a parchment, read his sentence, as is usually done to criminals who are about to be led to the scaffold.

"What does that mean?" demanded Aramis.

Juxon made a sign that he was as completely ignorant as himself.

"It is, then, for this very day?" said the king, with an emotion only perceptible to Juxon and Aramis.

"Were you not apprised that it was for this morning?" replied the man in black.

"And," said the king, "am I to die, like a common criminal, by the hands of the London executioner?"

"The London executioner has disappeared, sir," replied the parliamentary commissioner; "but a man has offered himself in his stead. The execution will therefore only be delayed for the time that you may require to settle your temporal and spiritual affairs."

A slight perspiration, that bedewed Charles's features, was the only indication he gave of any emotion on hearing this intelligence.

But Aramis became actually livid. His heart ceased to beat; he shut his eyes, and rested his hand upon a table. On seeing this profound grief, Charles appeared to forget his own. He went up to him, took his hand, and embraced him.

"Come, my friend," said he, with a soft melancholy smile, "take courage."

Then, turning towards the commissioner—"Sir," said he, "I am ready. I only want two things, that will not delay you long, I hope: the first is, to receive the sacrament; the second, to embrace my children, and to take a last farewell of them. Will that be permitted?"

"Yes, sir," replied the commissioner. And he left the room.

Aramis, having recovered himself, dug his nails into his flesh, and a heavy groan issued from his bosom. "Oh, my lord," said he, seizing Juxon's hands, "where is God? where is God?"

"My son," replied the bishop, with great firmness, "you do not see him, because earthly passions conceal him."

"My friend," said the king to Aramis, "do not thus give way to despair. You ask where is God? God is looking down upon your devotion, and my martyrdom; and, believe me, that both will have their reward. Attribute, therefore, what happens to man, and not to God. It is men who cause my death—it is men who make you weep."

"Yes, sire," said Aramis, "you are right: it is to men that I must attribute this: and it is men that I will make responsible for it."

"Sit down, Juxon," said the king, falling on his knees, "for you must receive my confession. Remain, sir," he continued, addressing Aramis, who was about to retire—"remain, Parry: I have nothing, even in the secresy of penitence, that I would not say before all; and I have only one regret, which is, that the whole world cannot hear, as you do."

Juxon sat down, and the king, kneeling before him, like the humblest of the faithful, began his confession.

CHAPTER XXV.

REMEMBER.

The royal confession being ended, Charles took the holy communion, and then asked to see his children. It struck ten o'clock; therefore, as the king had said, it was not a great delay.

And yet the people were already prepared. They knew that ten o'clock was the time fixed for the execution; they had assembled in the streets near the palace; and the king began to distinguish that distant noise, peculiar to a multitude and to the ocean, when the one is agitated by its passions, and the other by its storms.

The king's children arrived: first, the Princess Charlotte, and then the Duke of Gloucester—that is to say, a little fair girl, pretty, and with eyes bathed in tears; and a young boy, between eight and nine years of age, whose dry eyes and disdainfully pouting lip denoted early pride. The child had been weeping all night, but before all these people, he did not shed a tear.

Charles felt his heart melt within him at the sight of these two children, whom he had not seen for two years, and whom he now only saw just as he was going to die. Tears started into his eyes, and he turned round to wipe them away; for he wished to be firm before those to whom he bequeathed such an inheritance of suffering and wo.

He spoke first to the little girl, drawing her towards him, and

exhorting her to piety, resignation, and filial love. He then took the Duke of Gloucester, and seating him on his knee, that he might at the same time press him to his heart, and kiss his face—

"My son," said he to him, "in coming here, you saw many people, both in the streets and anterooms. These people are going to cut off your father's head. Never forget it. Some day, perhaps, seeing that you are near them, and that they have you in their power, they may wish to make you king, to the exclusion of the Prince of Wales, or the Duke of York, your elder brothers, who are, the one in France, the other I know not where. But you are not the king, my son, and you cannot become so, except by their death. Swear to me, therefore, that you will not let them put the crown on your head, until you have a legitimate right to it: for one day—listen well, my son—one day, if you did that, head and crown would both fall, and on that day you would not die so calm and so free from remorse as I now shall die. Swear this, my son."

The child stretched out his little hand between those of his father, and said, "Sire, I swear to your majesty—"

Charles interrupted him. "Henry," said he, "call me father."

"My father," replied the child, "I swear that they shall kill me, sooner than they shall make me king."

"Very well, my son," said Charles; "now kiss me, and you also, Charlotte, and never forget me."

"Oh, no: never! never!" cried the children, clasping their arms round their father's neck.

"Farewell!" said Charles—"farewell my children! Take them away, Juxon: their tears will leave me no courage to die."

Juxon tore the poor children from their father's arms, and gave them back to those who had brought them.

The door now remained open, so that every one might enter.

The king, seeing himself surrounded by guards and curious persons, who began to take possession of the room, remembered that the Count de la Fère was under the floor of the room, without being able to see him, and yet perhaps still hoping that he should soon do so. He was fearful that the slightest noise might be mistaken by him for a signal, and that, by recommencing his labours,

he might betray himself. He therefore remained quiet, and, by his example, kept all his attendants in the same state.

The king was not deceived: Athos was really under his feet. He was listening; and, in utter despair at not hearing the signal, he more than once began impatiently to chip the stone; and then, apprehensive of being heard, suddenly stopped again. This dreadful inaction lasted for two hours; and a deathlike silence reigned in the royal apartment.

Athos now resolved to ascertain the cause of this gloomy and mute tranquillity, which was only broken by the vast murmur of the crowd. He partially opened the drapery, which concealed the hole, and descended to the first stage of the scaffold. Above his head, and scarcely four inches from him, was the flooring that was laid on a level with the platform of the balcony, and which constituted the scaffold. The noise, that he had as yet but imperfectly heard, and which now came upon him, gloomy and threatening, made him start with terror. He advanced even to the edge of the scaffold, slightly drew aside the black serge, on a level with his eye, and beheld horsemen drawn up close to the terrible fabric; beyond the horse men was, a rank of men with partisans; beyond these, the musketeers; and beyond them, the first ranks of the people, who, like the dark ocean, heaved and groaned.

"What can have happened?" said Athos to himself, trembling like an aspen leaf. "The people are pressing forward, the soldiers are under arms, and amongst the spectators, who have their eyes fixed on the window, I perceive d'Artagnan. What does he expect? What is he looking at? Great God! can they have allowed the executioner to escape?"

Suddenly the drum beat hoarse and funereal above the place, and the noise of heavy and prolonged steps resounded over his head. It seemed to him that something like a vast procession weighed down the floors of Whitehall; and he soon heard the planks of the scaffold also creaking above him. He cast another look without; and the aspect of the mighty throng instantly dispelled the last ray of hope that had remained at the bottom of his heart.

The murmur of the crowd had altogether ceased. Every eye was fixed on the window. Mouths half open, and breathing suspended, indicated the expectation of some dreadful spectacle.

The noise of steps, which, from the place he then occupied under the floor of the royal apartment, Athos had heard above his head, was renewed on the scaffold, which bent so much under the weight that the planks almost touched the head of the unhappy gentleman. It was evident that two files of soldiers were taking up their position.

At the same moment a voice, well known to him, a noble voice, pronounced these words above his head:—

"Colonel, I wish address to the people."

Athos shuddered from head to foot. It was indeed the king, who was on the scaffold.

In fact, after having drank some drops of wine, and eaten a morsel of bread, Charles, weary of waiting for death, had suddenly determined to go and meet it, and had given the signal to march forward.

The folding sashes of the window were opened, and from the extremity of the vast apartment the people could perceive, silently advancing, first, a man disguised with a mask, whom they recognised as the executioner, by the axe that he held in his hand. This man advanced to the block, and laid the axe upon it.

Behind this man, pale but calm, and walking with a firm step, came Charles Stuart, attended by two priests. He was followed by the officials, whose duty it was to preside over the execution, and escorted by two files of men, armed with partisans, who ranged themselves on each side of the scaffold.

The appearance of the man with the mask excited a prolonged murmur. Every one was anxious to ascertain who this unknown executioner was, who had offered himself so opportunely, and thus enabled the people to witness, on the appointed day, the dreadful spectacle, which they supposed would have been deferred till the morrow. Every one, therefore, actually devoured him with their eyes; but all they could perceive was, that he was a man of middle height, clothed in black, and who appeared to be of mature age, as the extremity of a grizzly beard fell below the mask that concealed his face.

But on the appearance of the king, so calm, so noble, so dignified, silence was instantaneously restored, and every one could hear the wish he had expressed to address the people.

This request had doubtless been granted by him to whom it was addressed; for, in a firm and sonorous voice, which vibrated even to the inmost recesses of Athos's heart, the king began to speak, explaining his conduct to the people, and giving them advice for the benefit of England.

"Oh," murmured Athos to himself, "is it possible that what I hear and see is real? Is it possible that God has thus abandoned his representative on earth, to permit him to die so wretchedly? And I, who have not seen him—who have not even taken leave of him!"

A noise was heard, as if the instrument of death had been moved upon the block. The king paused.

"Do not touch the axe," he said; and he resumed his address at the point where he had broken off.

At the conclusion of the speech, there was a solemn silence above the count's head. He held his hand to his temples, and, although the cold was intense, large drops of perspiration trickled through his fingers. This silence indicated the last preparations.

The king cast a glance full of commiseration on the assembled throng, and taking off the order he wore, which was the diamond star that the queen had sent him, he gave it to the priest who accompanied Juxon. He then drew from his bosom a small diamond cross, which had also come from Henrietta.

"Sir," said he, addressing the priest, "I will keep this cross in my hand, even to the last moment; when I am dead, you will take from me."

"Yes, sire," said a voice, which Athos recognised as that of Aramis.

Charles, who had hitherto kept his head covered, now took of his hat, and threw it down near him; he next unloosened one by one, the buttons of his doublet, took it off, and threw it beside his hat; and then, as it was very cold, he asked for his dressing-gown, which was given him.

All these preparations were made with a fearful tranquillity. It might have been supposed that the king was going to lie down in his bed, and not in his coffin.

Raising his hair with his hands—"Will this trouble you, sir?" he said to the executioner: "in that case it can be confined by a string."

Charles accompanied these words with a look that seemed as if it wished to penetrate the mask of the unknown. That look, so noble, so calm, and so resolved, compelled the executioner to turn away his head; but ineluding the deep and searching gaze of the king, he encountered the fiery glance of Aramis.

The king, finding that he did not answer, repeated his question.

"It will suffice," replied the man, in a hoarse voice, "if you will remove it from your neck."

The king parted his hair with both his hands. Then looking at the block—"This block is very low," said he: "is there not a higher one?"

"It is the common block," replied the executioner.

"Do you think that you can cut off my head with one blow?" demanded the king.

"I hope so," replied the executioner.

There was such a strange intonation in these three words, "*I hope so,*" that all who heard them shuddered, except the king.

"That is well," said he, calmly. "And now, executioner, listen to me."

The man made one step towards the king, and leant upon his axe.

"I do not wish you to take me by surprise," said Charles. "I shall kneel down to pray; but you must not then strike."

"And when shall I strike?" demanded the executioner.

"When I lay my head upon the block, and stretch out my hand, saying '*Remember!*' then strike boldly.

The man in the mask slightly inclined his head.

"Now is the time to quit the world," said the king to those around him. "Gentlemen, I leave you in the midst of the tempest,

and procede you to that country where the storm is never known. Farewell!"

"He looked at Aramis, and gave him a particular sign of the head. "Now, sir," said he, "draw back from me, I beseech you, and let me pray in a low voice. Do you also retire," he said to the executioner: it will be but for a moment, and I know that I belong to you. Only remember, not to strike me before I give you the signal."

Charles knelt down, made the sign of the cross, and put his lips to the boards, as if he wished to kiss the platform; then laying one hand on the floor, and the other on the block:

"Count de la Fère," he said in French, "are you there, and can I speak to you?"

That voice struck straight to Athos's heart, and pierced it like the sharpest steel. "Yes, your majesty," he replied, in a trembling voice.

"Oh, faithful friend generous heart!" said the king; "I could not be saved by you. It was not to be. Now, at the risk of sacrilege, I will speak to you. Yes, I have spoken to men—I have spoken to God: I now speak to you the last of all. For supporting a cause that I considered sacred, I have lost the throne of my fathers and diverted the heritage of my children. One million in gold remains, which I buried in the cellars of the castle at Newcastle, just before I left that town. You alone know that this money exists: make use of it, then, whenever you think it may be most useful to my eldest son. And now, Count de la Fère, bid me adieu."

"Adieu, majesty, saint and martyr!" stammered out Athos, frozen with horror.

There was then a moment's silence, during which Athos fancied that the king arose, and changed his position.

Then, in a voice full and sonorous, so that not only could it be heard on the scaffold, but far beyond, amid the throng—

"*Remember!*" said the king.

He had scarcely finished the word, before a terrible blow shook the flooring of the scaffold. The dust arose in clouds from the drapery, almost depriving Athos of sight; but suddenly, by a

mechanical movement, raising his eyes and his head, a warm drop fell upon his forehead. Athos recoiled with a repulsive shudder, and at the same moment the drops changed into a black stream, that flowed through the boards.

Athos fell upon his knees, as if struck with imbecility and utter helplessness. But he soon became aware, by the receding murmur, that the crowd was departing; and having remained a minute or two longer, mute, motionless, and in great consternation, he regained his fortitude so far as to be able to dip the end of his handkerchief in the blood of the royal martyr. Then, as the crowd diminished, he descended, cut his way through the serge, slipped between two horses, mingled with the people, whose dress he wore, and reached the hotel the first of the four.

On going up to his apartment, and looking into a glass, he saw his forehead marked with a large red spot: he put his hand to it, drew it back smeared with the king's blood, and became insensible.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE MAN WITH THE MASK.

Although it was only four o'clock in the afternoon, it was nearly dark. Aramis next returned, and found Athos, if not insensible, at least in utter prostration of mind. At the first words spoken by his friend, the count awoke from the species of lethargy into which he had fallen.

"Well," said Aramis, "conquered by fate!"

"Conquered!" said Athos, "Noble and unhappy king!"

"Are you wounded?" inquired Aramis.

"No: this blood is his." And the count wiped his brow.

"Where were you, then?"

"Where you left me—under the scaffold."

"And you saw everything?"

"No, but I heard everything. God preserve me from such another hour as I passed there! Has not my hair turned white?"

"You know, then, that I did not leave him?"

"I heard your voice until the very last moment."

"Here is the star that he gave me," said Aramis, "and the cross that I took from his hand. He desired that they might be returned to the queen."

"And here is a handkerchief to wrap them in," said Athos. And he drew from his pocket the handkerchief he had dipped in the king's blood.

"And now," said Athos, "what have they done with the body?"

"By Cromwell's orders, regal honours have been paid to it. We placed it in a leaden coffin: the physicians are now engaged in embalming the unfortunate remains; and when they have finished, the king will be laid in an illuminated chapel."

"Mockery!" murmured Athos gloomily. "Regal honours, to him they have murdered!"

"That proves," said Aramis, "that the king dies, but that royalty never dies."

"Alas!" said Athos, "he is perhaps the last royal knight that the world will see."

"Come, come, do not give way to despair, count," said Porthos, whose heavy step was now heard on the stairs; "we are all mortal, my poor friends."

"You come back late, my dear Porthos," said the Count de la Fère.

"Yes," answered Porthos, "there were people in my way, who retarded me. They were dancing, the wretches! I took one of them by the neck, and I fancy that I almost throttled him. A patrol came up at the moment; but, fortunately for me, the man with whom I was more particularly engaged could not speak. I therefore took advantage of his silence, and turned aside into a little street, which led to one still smaller, and there I lost myself. As I do not know London, and cannot speak English, I imagined that I should never find my way again; but, at last, here I am."

"But d'Artagnan," said Aramis: "have you not seen him, and has nothing happened to him?"

"We were separated by the crowd," answered Porthos; "and, in spite of all my endeavours. I could not rejoin him."

"Oh!" said Athos, bitterly, "I saw him. He was in the first rank of the crowd, admirably situated to lose nothing; and as, after all, the sight was a curious one, he no doubt wished to see it to the end."

"Oh! Count de la Fére," said an unruffled voice, although somewhat affected by the exertion he had made, "is it really you who thus calumniate the absent?"

This reproach touched Athos's heart. Nevertheless, as the sensation he had experienced on beholding d'Artagnan in the first ranks of this ferocious and besotted people, was deep and painful, he contented himself with replying—

"I do not calumniate you, my friend. They were anxious about you here, and I told them where you were. You did not know King Charles: he was a mere stranger to you; and, therefore, you were not obliged to love him."

And, on uttering these words, he held out his hand to his friend. But d'Artagnan pretended not to perceive it, and kept his own hand under his cloak. Athos then allowed his to fall gently by his side.

"Humph! I am very tired," said d'Artagnan, seating himself.

"Drink a glass of wine," said Aramis, taking a bottle from the table, and filling a glass: "drink that, it will refresh you."

"Yes, let us drink some wine," said Athos, feeling the Gascon's displeasure, and wishing to touch his glass with his own: "let us drink, and leave this abominable country. The felucca awaits us, you know. Let us depart this very evening: we have now nothing more to do here."

"You are in a monstrous hurry, sir count," said d'Artagnan.

"This bloody soil actually burns my feet," replied Athos.

"The snow has not the same effect upon me," said the Gascon.

"But what would you have us do here," demanded Athos, "now that the king is dead?"

"So, sir count," replied d'Artagnan, carelessly, "you do not see that anything remains for you to do in England?"

"Nothing—nothing," said Athos, "except to doubt the divine goodness, and to despise my own powers."

"Well, then, as for me," said d'Artagnan, "as for me—a pitiful, sanguinary fool, who went and placed myself at thirty paces from the scaffold, that I might the better see the beheading of that king, who I did not know, and who was, consequently, indifferent to me—I think differently from the count. I remain!"

Athos turned extremely pale: every one of his friend's reproaches vibrated to the inmost recesses of his heart.

"What! you remain in London?" said Porthos to d'Artagnan.

"Yes," said he. "And you?"

"Forsooth," said Porthos, somewhat embarrassed before Athos and Aramis—"forsooth, if you remain, as I came with you, I will not go back without you. I will not leave you alone in this abominable country."

"Thank you, my excellent friend. Then I have a little enterprise to propose to you, which came into my head whilst I was looking at a certain spectacle, and which we will execute together when the count is gone."

"What is it?" said Porthos.

"It is to find out the name of that man with the mask, who offered himself so kindly to cut off the king's head."

"A man with a mask!" exclaimed Athos. "You did not, then, let the executioner escape?"

"The executioner?" said d'Artagnan: "he is still in the cellar, where, I presume, he is holding an interesting conversation with some of our host's bottles. But you remind me—"

He went to the door. "Mousqueton!" he cried.

"Sir?" replied a voice, that appeared to issue from the lowest depths of the earth.

"Liberate your prisoner," said d'Artagnan: "all is over."

"But," said Athos, "who then is the miscreant who laid hands on the king?"

"An amateur executioner," replied Aramis, "who, after all,

handles the axe with great facility, for, as *he hoped*, he only used one blow."

"Did you not see his features?" inquired Athos.

"He wore a mask," replied d'Artagnan.

"But you, who were near him, Aramis?"

"I only saw a grizzly beard, which descended below his mask."

"He is, therefore, a man of mature age?" said Athos.

"Oh," said d'Artagnan, "that indicates nothing. When any one puts on a mask, he can easily put on a beard too."

"I am sorry that I did not follow him," said Porthos.

"Well, then, my dear Porthos," said d'Artagnan, "that was exactly the idea that entered my mind."

Athos now comprehended all. "Pardon me, d'Artagnan?" said he: "I doubted God; therefore I might easily doubt you. Pardon me, my friend?"

We will see about that presently," answered d'Artagnan, with a forced smile.

"Well, then," said Aramis.

"Well," continued d'Artagnan, "whilst I was looking, not at the king, as the count thinks, (for I know what it is to see a man die, and, although I ought to be habituated to such sights, they always make me feel uncomfortable,) but at the masked executioner, the idea suggested itself, as I have told you, to know who he was. Now, as we are accustomed to depend upon each other, and to call for each other's assistance—as one appeals to the second hand to aid the first—I mechanically looked around me to see if Porthos was there: for I saw you near the king, Aramis, and I knew that Athos must be under the scaffold—which makes me pardon you," he added, holding out his hand to Athos, "for you must have suffered acutely. I therefore, as I have said, looked around me, when I saw, to my right, a head which had been cut open, and which, whether well or otherwise, had been mended with black taffeta. 'Zounds!' said I to myself, 'there is some of my handywork: I patched up that poll in some sort of fashion.' In fact, it was that unfortunate Scotsman, the brother of Parry—he upon whom, as you are aware,

M. Groslow amused himself by trying his strength, and who had only half a head the last time we met him."

"Ah!" said Porthos, "the man with the black chickens."

"Exactly so; the same. He was making signs to another man, who was on my left. I turned, and discovered honest Grimaud, wholly engaged, like myself, in devouring with his eyes the masked executioner. 'Oh!' said I to him. And as this syllable is the abbreviation which the count makes use of, on the days when he speaks to him, Grimaud understood that he was the person addressed, and turned as if moved by a spring. He also recognised me, and directing his finger towards the man with the mask—'Hem,' said he, which meant, 'Do you see.' '*Parbleu!*' answered I; and we perfectly comprehended each other. I then turned towards Parry's brother, who also had most eloquent looks. To be brief: all was finished, as you know, in a very melancholy way. The people departed; and as the evening gradually set in, I retired into a corner of the square, with Grimaud, and was followed by the Scotsman, whom I had requested by a sign to remain with us. From thence I observed the executioner, who, having retired to the royal apartment, was changing his dress, that which he had worn being covered with blood; after which he put a black hat on his head, wrapped himself in a cloak, and disappeared. I guessed that he was coming out, and ran opposite the door; and, in five minutes after, we saw him descending the stairs."

"And you followed him!" exclaimed Athos.

"Of course," said d'Artagnan; "but it was not without difficulty, let me tell you; for every moment he turned round, and then we were obliged to conceal ourselves, or to assume an air of indifference. I could easily have gone up to him, and killed him; but I am not an egotist, and it was an entertainment which I was preparing for you, and Athos, to give you some slight consolation. At last, after half Aramis an hour's walk, through the most crooked streets of the city, he reached a small solitary house, where no sound and no light indicated the presence of man. Grimaud drew a pistol from his enormous breeches: 'Hem?' said he, showing it to me. 'No,' said I, and I arrested his arm: I have told you that I had my idea. The

man with the mask stopped before a low door, and drew out a key, but before putting it into the lock, he turned to see if he was followed. I was ensconced behind a tree, Grimaud behind a pillar, and the Scotsman, who had nothing to conceal him, threw himself flat upon his face on the pavement. Doubtless he whom we pursued thought himself alone; for I heard the grating of the key, the door opened, and he disappeared."

"The wretch!" exclaimed Aramis. "And whilst you are come here, he will have fled, and we shall not find him again."

"Why, Aramis," said d'Artagnan, "you must take me for a blockhead."

"Nevertheless," said Athos, "in your absence—"

"Well, in my absence, had I not Grimaud and the Scotsman to take my place. Before he could have had time to proceed ten steps in the house, I had gone completely round it, and at the door by which he entered I placed our Scotsman, signifying to him, that if the man with the black mask should come out, he was to follow him wherever he went, whilst Grimaud was to put himself upon his traces, and return to give us the requisite information. In fine, I stationed Grimaud at the other door, giving him the same orders. And now, here I am! The brute is surrounded: who wishes to be present at the halloo?"

Athos threw himself into the arms of d'Artagnan, who was wiping his brow.

"My friend," he exclaimed, "you are really too good to pardon me. I am wrong—a hundred times wrong! I ought to know you by this time; but there is something so fundamentally bad in us, that we are always suspicious."

"Hum!" said Porthos, "can this executioner chance to be M. Cromwell, who, to be sure that his business was well done, wished to do it himself?"

"Very likely, truly! Cromwell is short and stout, and this man is thin, lank, and rather tall than short."

"Some condemned soldier, to whom pardon was offered at this price," said Athos, "as they did to the unfortunate Chalais."

"No, no," continued d'Artagnan; "it was neither the measured

pace of a foot soldier, nor the wide step of a dragoon: there was an elegant manner, and a distinguished gait in him. Either I deceive myself greatly, or we are engaged with a gentleman."

"A gentleman!" exclaimed Athos: "impossible! It would be a disgrace to the whole grade."

"A splendid chase!" said Porthos, with a laugh which made the windows rattle—"a splendid chase, by Jove!"

"Do you leave England then, Athos?" demanded d'Artagnan.

"No, I remain!" replied that gentleman, with a menacing gesture, that promised no good to him for whom that gesture was meant.

"Our swords, then!" said Aramis—"our swords! and let us not lose one instant."

The four friends promptly resumed their dresses as gentlemen, girded on their swords, called for Mousqueton and Blaisois, and ordered them to settle their account with the host, and to hold every thing ready for their departure, it being very probable that they would leave London that very night.

The night was become even more gloomy, whilst the snow fell heavily, and seemed like a vast winding-sheet spread over the regicide city. It was about seven o'clock in the the evening, and scarcely any passengers were to be seen in the streets: every one was conversing in his own family, and in a subdued voice, respecting the terrible occurrences of the morning.

The four friends, enveloped in their cloaks, traversed all those places in the city, so thronged during the day, so deserted during that night. D'Artagnan led them, endeavouring, from time to time, to find the mark he had made on the walls with his poignard; but the night was so dark that there was great difficulty in discovering them. Yet d'Artagnan had fixed each post, each water-spout, and each sign so well in his memory, that after a walk of about half an hour, they came in sight of the solitary house.

D'Artagnan believed, for an instant, that Parry's brother had disappeared; but he was mistaken: the hardy Scotsman, accustomed to the snows of his own mountains, was stretched near a stone pillar, and, like a statue thrown from its base, insensible to

the inclemency of the weather, had allowed himself to be covered with snow; but at the approach of the four friends he rose up.

"Come," said Athos, "here is another good servant. Really, brave men are less rare than we thought. This is encouraging."

"Do not let us be too anxious to weave crowns for our Scotsman," said d'Artagnan: "I fancy that the rogue is here on his own private account. I have heard that those gentry, who have first seen light beyond the Tweed, are very revengeful. Let Master Groslow take care! He might, perchance, pass but a sorry quarter of an hour should he encounter him."

And leaving his friends he went up to the Scotsman, and made himself known to him. He then beckoned to the others to approach.

"Well?" said Athos, in English.

"No one has left the house," said Parry's brother.

"Very well. Do you, Porthos and Aramis, remain with this man. D'Artagnan will lead me to Grimaud."

Grimaud, as motionless as the Scotsman, was leaning against a hollow willow tree, which served him as a defence against the weather. For an instant, as in the case of the other sentinel, d'Artagnan thought that the man with the mask was gone, and that Grimaud had followed him. But suddenly a head appeared, and a low whistle was heard.

"Oh!" said Athos.

"Yes," said Grimaud.

They went up to the willow.

"Well," inquired d'Artagnan, "has any one left the house?"

"No, but some one has gone in," answered Grimaud.

"A man, or a woman?"

"A man."

"Aha!" said d'Artagnan, "there are two, then?"

"I wish there were four," said Athos: "the party would be more equal."

"Perhaps they are four," said d'Artagnan.

"How so?"

"Might not other men have been in the house waiting for them?"

"That could be ascertained," said Grimaud, pointing to the window shutters, through which some rays of light were penetrating.

"That is true," said Athos. "Call the others."

They went round the house, and beckoned Porthos and Aramis, who hastily joined them.

"Have you seen anything?" they inquired.

"No, but we soon shall," replied d'Artagnan, pointing to Grimaud, who, by clinging to the projections of the wall, had already got five or six feet from the ground.

All four went up to the house. Grimaud continued his ascent, with the agility of a cat, until, at last, he managed to get hold of one of those hooks that serve to confine the shutters when they are open; at the same time he found a moulding of the wall, that appeared sufficient to afford a support for his foot; for he made a sign that he had attained his object. Then he put his eye to a chink in the shutter.

"Well?" said d'Artagnan.

Grimaud exhibited his hand closed, with the exception of two fingers, which were open.

"Speak," said Athos; "we cannot distinguish your signs. How many are there?"

Grimaud made an enormous effort. "Two," said he: "one faces me, the other turns his back."

"Very well; and who is he who faces you?

"The man I saw enter."

"Do you know him?"

"I thought I did, and was not mistaken—short and stout."

"Who can it be?" said the four friends, in a low voice.

"General Oliver Cromwell."

The four friends looked at each other.

"And the other?" demanded Athos.

"Thin and lank."

"It is the executioner," said d'Artagnan and Aramis in the same breath.

"I can only see his back," said Grimaud. "But wait: now

he is moving, and turning round: if he has taken off his mask, I shall be able to see——Ah!"

Grimaud, as if he had been struck to the heart, relinquished the iron hook, and threw himself back, emitting a hollow groan. Porthos caught him in his arms.

"Did you see him?" demanded the four friends.

"Yes," replied Grimaud, with bristling hair.

"The lean lank man?" said d'Artagnan.

"Yes."

"In fact, the executioner?" said Aramis.

"Yes."

"And who is he?" inquired Porthos.

"He! he!" stammered out Grimaud, pale as death, and seizing with his trembling hands, the hand of his master.

"Who is he?" said Athos.

"Mordaunt!" replied Grimaud.

D'Artagnan, Porthos, and Aramis uttered an exclamation of joy.

Athos started back, and put his hand to his brow. "Fate!" murmured he.

CHAPTER XXVII.

CROMWELL'S HOUSE.

It really was Mordaunt, whom d'Artagnan had followed, without knowing him. On entering the house, he took off his mask and grizzly beard, asended the stairs, and entered a room lighted by a lamp, and adorned with hangings of a sombre colour, and there found himself in the presence of a man, who was seated at a desk, writing.

This man was Cromwell, who, as is known, had, in various parts of London, two or three of these retreats, unknown to the generality of his acquaintance, and the secret of which was only disclosed to

his most intimate friends; and of the latter, as we have seen, Mordaunt was one. When he entered, Cromwell raised his head.

"Well, Mordaunt," said he, "you come late."

"General," replied Mordaunt, "I wished to see the ceremony to the end, and that delayed me,"

"Ah!" said Cromwell, "I did not think that you were usually so curious."

"I am always curious to see the fall of your enemies, and this was not considered one of the least. But you, general—were you not at Whitehall?"

"No," replied Cromwell.

There was a moment's silence.

"Have you heard any of the particulars?" demanded Mordaunt.

"None whatever: I have been here since the morning. I only know that there was a plot to save the king."

"Ah! did you know that?" exclaimed Mordaunt.

"It is of little consequence: four men, disguised as workmen, were to rescue the king from prison, and conduct him to Greenwich, where a bark awaited him."

"And knowing this, general, did you remain here, far from the city, tranquil and inactive?"

"Yes, tranquil," said Cromwell; "but who told you that I was inactive?"

"And yet, if this plot had succeeded?"

"I wish it had."

"I thought that you regarded the death of Charles as a misfortune necessary for the welfare of England?"

"Well," said Cromwell, "and that is still my opinion. But his death was all that was wanted; and perhaps it would have been much better that it had not been on the scaffold."

"Why so, general?"

Cromwell smiled.

"Pardon me," said Mordaunt, "but you know, general, that I am a political scholar, and I wish, in all circumstances, to profit by the lessons of my master."

"Because it would have been said, that although I caused him to be justly condemned, I had allowed him to escape through commiseration."

"But if he had really escaped?"

"Impossible! my precautions were taken."

"And did you know the four men who undertook to save the king?"

"They were those four Frenchmen, of whom two were sent by Madame Henrietta to her husband, and two by Cardinal Mazarin to me."

"And do you think, sir, that Mazarin charged them to do what they have done?"

"It is possible; but he will disavow them."

"Why so?"

"Because they have failed."

"General, you gave me two of those Frenchmen, because they were guilty of bearing arms in favour of Charles I. Now that they are guilty of a plot against England itself, will you give me all four of them?"

"Take them," said Cromwell

Mordaunt, bowed with a smile of triumphant ferocity.

"But," said Cromwell, seeing that Mordaunt was going to thank him, "let us return, if you please, to this unhappy Charles. Were there any cries amongst the people?"

"Very few, except 'Long live Cromwell!'"

"Where were you situated?"

Mordaunt looked for an instant at the general, to read in his eyes the purport of this inquiry, and to ascertain whether he did not already know everything. But the fiery look of Mordaunt could not penetrate the gloomy depths of Cromwell's eyes.

"I was placed so that I could see and hear everything," said Mordaunt.

It was now Cromwell's turn to look earnestly at Mordaunt, and Mordaunt's to make himself impenetrable. After a few moments' examination, he turned his eyes away with indifference.

"It seems," said Cromwell, "that this temporary and hastily

supplied executioner did his duty well. The blow, as far as I have been informed at least, was delivered in a most masterly way."

Mordaunt recollected that Cromwell had told him that he had received no particulars whatever; and he was now convinced that the general had been present at the execution, concealed behind some curtain or shutter.

"In fact," said Mordaunt, in a calm voice, and with an unmoved countenance, "a single blow sufficed."

"Perhaps," said Cromwell, "it was, after all, some professional man."

"Do you think so, sir?"

"Why not?"

"The man had not the air of an executioner."

"And what other person, except an executioner," demanded Cromwell, "would have been willing to perform such a frightful office?"

"But," said Mordaunt, "perchance some personal enemy of King Charles, who may have made a vow of revenge, and who has now accomplished that vow—perhaps some gentleman, who had powerful reasons for hating the king, fallen as he is, and who, knowing that he was about to fly and escape him, thus thrust himself in the way, with his face masked, and the axe in his hand, not as a substitute for the executioner, but as the representative of fate."

"It is possible," said Cromwell.

"And if it were the case," said Mordaunt, "would your honour condemn the deed?"

"It is not for me to judge," said Cromwell. "It rests between him and his God."

"But if your honour knew this gentleman?"

"I do not know him, sir," said Cromwell, "and I do not wish to know him. What does it signify to me who it was? The moment Charles was condemned, it was not a man who cut off his head—it was an axe."

"And yet, without the man," said Mordaunt, "the king would have escaped."

Cromwell smiled.

"Without doubt. You said yourself that he would have been carried off."

"He would have been taken to Greenwich, where he would have got on board a felucca, with his four preservers. But in this felucca there were four of my men, with four barrels of gunpowder. At sea, the four men would have got into the boat; and you are already too skilful a politician, Mordaunt, to require any further explanation."

"Yes; at sea they would all have been blown up."

"Exactly so. The explosion would have done that which the axe could not do: King Charles would have disappeared, completely annihilated. It would then have been said, that, having escaped human justice, he had been punished and overtaken by the vengeance of Heaven—that we were nothing more than his judges, and that it was God who was his executioner. This is what your masked gentleman has made me lose, Mordaunt; you see, therefore, that I was right when I did not wish to know him; for really, in spite of his excellent intentions, I could not be grateful for what he has done."

"Sir," said Mordaunt, "as always, I bow myself humbly before you. You are a profound thinker; and," continued he, "your idea of the mined felucca is sublime."

"Absurd," said Cromwell, "since it is become useless. No idea is sublime in politics except that which bears fruit; every idea which fails, is foolish and barren. You will, therefore, go to Greenwich this evening, Mordaunt," said Cromwell, rising: "you will inquire for the master of the felucca *l'Eclair*, you will show him a white handkerchief, knotted at the four corners—it is the signal agreed upon—you will tell his men to disembark, and you will have the powder returned to the arsenal: unless, indeed—"

"Unless, indeed—?" responded Mordaunt, whose countenance had been illumined by a ferocious joy, whilst Cromwell was speaking.

"Unless this felucca, such as she is, could aid your personal projects."

"Ah, my lord, my lord," exclaimed Mordaunt, "God, in

making you his elect, has given you his penetration, which nothing can escape."

"I believe that you called me my lord," said Cromwell, laughing. "It matters not, as we are alone; but you must take care that such an expression does not escape you before our silly Puritans."

"But will you not be called so, shortly?"

"I hope so, at least," replied Cromwell; "but the time is not yet come."

Cromwell arose, and took his cloak.

"Are you going, sir?" said Mordaunt.

"Yes," answered Cromwell. "I slept here last night and the night before; and you know it is not my custom to sleep three nights in the same bed."

"Then, sir," said Mordaunt, "you give me leave of absence for the night?"

"And also for to-morrow, if you require it," said Cromwell. "Since yesterday evening," he added, smiling, "you have done enough for my service; and as you have some personal affairs to settle, it is just that I should leave you your own time."

"Thank you, sir; I hope it will be well employed."

Cromwell made Mordaunt a slight bow; then turning—"are you armed?" demanded he.

"I have my sword," said Mordaunt.

"And is there no one waiting for you at the door?"

"No one."

"Then you ought to come with me, Mordaunt."

"Thank you, sir; the turnings that you are obliged to make in passing through the subterranean passage, would occupy my time; and, after what you have just told me, I have perhaps already lost too much. I will go out at the other door."

"Go, then," said Cromwell; and putting his hand upon a secret knob, he opened a door, so completely hidden in the tapestry, that it was impossible for the most practised eye to find it out.

This door moved by a steel spring, and closed itself behind him. It was one of those secret outlets, which, as history informs us,

existed in all the mysterious houses inhabited by Cromwell. It passed under the deserted street, and opened into the bottom of a grotto, in the garden of another house, situated a hundred paces from that which the future Protector had just quitted.

It was during the latter part of this scene, that Grimaud had espied these two men through an opening in the shutter, and had successively recognised Cromwell and Mordaunt.

It has been seen what effect this intelligence had produced on the four friends. D'Artagnan was the first who entirely recovered his faculties.

"Mordaunt!" said he. "Ah, by heaven! it is God himself who offers him to us."

"Yes," said Porthos; "let us break open the door, and fall upon him."

"On the contrary," said d'Artagnan, "let us break nothing. No noise: it will collect a crowd; and if he is, as Grimaud says, with his worthy master, he probably has a party of his Ironsides at hand, some fifty paces off. Halloo, Grimaud; come here, and try to keep yourself upon your legs."

Grimaud came up. As he recovered his senses, he had become furious, and yet he was quite firm and collected.

"Now," said d'Artagnan, "mount to the window again, and tell us if Mordaunt is yet with his companion, and whether he is coming out, or going to bed. Should his companion still be there, we will wait until he is alone; should he come out, we will catch him at his exit; should he remain, then we will break open the window. It makes less noise, and is less difficult, than breaking open a door."

Grimaud silently began to climb to the window.

"Guard the other issue, Athos and Aramis; we will remain here, with Porthos."

The two friends obeyed.

"Well, Grimaud?" demanded d'Artagnan.

"He is alone," said Grimaud.

"Are you sure of it?"

"Yes."

"We have not seen his companion come out."

"Perhaps he went out by the other door?"

"What is he doing?"

"He is wrapping himself up in his cloak, and putting on his gloves."

"Come here!" said d'Artagnan in a low voice.

Porthos put his hand to his poignard, which he mechanically drew from its scabbard.

"Sheath it, friend Porthos," said d'Artagnan: "we must not think of striking yet. We have got him; therefore let us proceed in an orderly manner. We have some mutual explanations to exchange, and this is a sequel to the d'Armentières scene; only let us hope that this may have no offspring, and that, if we crush him, everything will be annihilated with him."

"Hush!" said Grimaud: "he is now preparing to come out—he is now going up to the lamp—it is extinguished. I can see nothing more."

"Down with you, then—down with you!"

Grimaud leaped back, and alighted on his feet: the snow deadened the sound, and nothing was heard.

"Tell Athos and Aramis to place themselves on each side of their door, as Porthos and I are going to do here—that they must clap their hands if they get hold of him, and we will do the same if we catch him."

Grimaud vanished.

"Porthos, Porthos," said d'Artagnan, "draw aside your enormous shoulders, my dear friend: he must come out without seeing anything."

"Provided he comes this way."

"Hush!" said d'Artagnan.

Porthos stuck himself against the wall, as if he wished to enter it. D'Artagnan did the same.

The steps of Mordaunt were now heard on the stairs. An invisible wicket glided grating in its groove, and Mordaunt looked out; but, thanks to the precautions taken by the two friends, he saw nothing. He then introduced the key into the lock; the door opened, and he made his appearance on the threshold. At the same moment

he found himself face to face with d'Artagnan. He wished to shut the door again, but Porthos threw himself forward, and opened it to its full extent. Porthos clapped his hands three times, and Athos and Aramis ran up.

Mordaunt turned deadly pale, but he neither uttered a cry, nor called for assistance.

D'Artagnan went straight up to Mordaunt, and thrusting him back with his chest, made him remount the stairs, which were lighted by a lamp that permitted the Gascon to keep Mordaunt's hands always in view. But Mordaunt was well aware, that, even if d'Artagnan were killed, he would still have to rid himself of his three other enemies. He did not therefore make use of one single defensive movement, or threatening gesture. Having reached the door, Mordaunt felt himself driven against it; and doubtless he then thought that all would soon be over with him. But he was mistaken: d'Artagnan stretched forth his hand and opened the door; and he and Mordaunt found themselves in the room, where, ten minutes before, the young man had been talking with Cromwell.

Porthos came in after him. Stretching out his arm, he unhooked the lamp from the ceiling; and by means of this first lamp, he lighted the second.

Athos and Aramis appeared at the door, which they locked.

"Will you give yourself the trouble to take a seat," said d'Artagnan, presenting one to the young man.

He took the chair from d'Artagnan's hands, and, pale but calm, seated himself. At three paces from him, Aramis brought three seats, for himself, d'Artagnan, and Porthos. Athos went and seated himself in a corner, in the most distant part of the room, appearing resolved to remain a motionless spectator of what was about to take place.

Porthos seated himself on the left, and Aramis on the right of d'Artagnan.

Athos appeared completely overwhelmed. Porthos kept rubbing the palms of his hands with a feverish impatience. Aramis bit his lips even to bleeding, although he smiled. D'Artagnan alone moderated his feelings, at least in appearance.

"M. Mordaunt," said he to the young man, "since chance has at last brought us together, after so many days lost in running after each other, let us have a little conversation together."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

CONVERSATION.

Mordaunt had been taken so completely by surprise, and had mounted the stairs in such a state of utter confusion, that he had had no time for reflection. One thing is quite certain, that his first sensations produced extreme agitation, and that surprise and undefinable terror which assails a man, whose arm is suddenly seized by a deadly and more powerful enemy, at the very moment when he believes that enemy is in another place, and far differently engaged.

But when once seated, and the moment he saw that a reprieve was accorded him, from whatever motive it might spring, he concentrated all his ideas, and rallied all his faculties. The fiery look of d'Artagnan, instead of intimidating, as it were electrified, him; for this look, all burning as it was with menace, was yet frank and open in its hatred and anger. Mordaunt, ready to grasp at every opportunity that might offer, to free himself from this dangerous situation, whether by force or stratagem, collected himself together like a bear driven to his den, who follows, with an apparently motionless eye, every gesture of the hunter who has tracked him.

Yet this eye, by a rapid movement, rested on the long and powerful sword that hung by his side; and, without the slightest appearance of affectation, he laid his left hand upon its hilt, drew it round within reach of his right hand, and seated himself, as d'Artagnan had requested him.

The latter, no doubt, expected some aggressive word, that might lead to one of these mocking or terrible conversations that he sustained so well. Aramis said to himself, "We are now going to

hear some foolish compliments." Porthos bit his moustache, murmuring, "What a vast deal of ceremony to crush this serpent." Athos buried himself in a corner of the room, motionless and pale as a marble bas-relief, and feeling, in spite of his apparent apathy, his forehead covered with perspiration.

Mordaunt remained perfectly silent; and, when he was well assured that his sword was at his command, he crossed his legs with great tranquillity, and waited.

This silence could not be further prolonged without becoming ridiculous. D'Artagnan saw this, and, as he had invited Mordaunt to seat himself to converse, he thought that he ought to begin the conversation.

"It appears to me, sir," said he, with his overstrained politeness, "that you change your costume as rapidly as the Italian buffoons that Cardinal Mazarin sent for from Bergamo, and whom he no doubt took you to see during your visit to France."

Mordaunt did not answer.

"Just now," continued d'Artagnan, "you were disguised—I mean to say, dressed—as an assassin; and now—"

"And now, on the contrary, I have all the appearance of being in the dress of a man who is going to be assassinated: is it not so?" responded Mordaunt, in his abrupt calm voice.

"Oh! sir," replied d'Artagnan, "how can you say such things, when you are in the company of gentlemen, and have such a good sword by your side?"

"There is no sword so good as to be equal to four swords and four daggers; without reckoning the swords and poignards of your followers at the door."

"Pardon me, sir," replied d'Artagnan; "you make a slight mistake: those who are waiting for us at the door, are not our followers, but our lacqueys. I am anxious to place things in their true light."

Mordaunt's only answer was a smile, that ironically curled his lips.

"But that is not the question at issue," said d'Artagnan, "and I will return to the real subject of discussion. I therefore do myself

the honour of asking you, sir, why you have exchanged your exterior garb. The mask was sufficiently useful to you, it seems to me; the grizzly beard suited you admirably; and as for that axe, with which you delivered such an illustrious blow, I do not think it would be unsuitable at this moment. Why, therefore, did you lay it aside?'

"Because, in recalling to my mind the scene at Armentières, I thought that I should find four axes instead of one, since I was about to meet four executioners."

"Sir," replied d'Artagnan, with the greatest possible serenity, although a slight motion of the eyebrows announced that he began to grow warm—"sir, although most profoundly vicious and corrupt, you are very young, which is the cause of my not taking notice of your frivolous expressions. Yes, frivolous; for what you have just said has not the slightest connexion with our present situation. In fact, we could not offer a sword to madame your mother, and invite her to fence with us. But from you, sir, from a young gentleman who handles the poignard and pistol as we have seen you do, and who carries at his side a sword of that length, there is no one who has not the right to demand the favour of a meeting."

"Ah!" said Mordaunt, "then it is a duel that you want?" And he rose up with sparkling eye, as if ready instantaneously to respond to the challenge.

Porthos rose also, always ready for such adventures.

"Pardon me, pardon me," said d'Artagnan, with the same coolness; "let there be no hurry; for each of us ought to be anxious that things should go on according to rules. Sit down, then, my dear Porthos; and you, M. Mordaunt, will you remain quiet? We will regulate this affair in the best way we can; and I am going to be candid with you. Confess, M. Mordaunt, that you greatly wish to kill us—the one or the others?"

"The one *and* the others," replied Mordaunt.

D'Artagnan turned towards Aramis, and said to him—"It is a great happiness, you must allow, Aramis, that M. Mordaunt understands so well the niceties of the French language. At least, there will be no misunderstanding between us, and we shall arrange every thing wonderfully well."

Then turning towards Mordaunt. "Dear M. Mordaunt," he continued, "I will tell you that these gentlemen repay with interest your kind sentiments towards them, and would also be quite charmed to kill you. And I will say more, that most probably they will kill you. However, it will be like loyal gentlemen, and the best proof I can give you of it, is this."

And with these words d'Artagnan threw his hat upon the carpet, drew back his chair to the wall, made a sign to his friends to do the same, and bowing to Mordaunt with a grace truly French, "I am at your command, sir," he continued: "for, if you have nothing to say against the honour I claim, I will be the person to commence, if you please. My sword is shorter than yours, it is true; but never mind, I hope the arm will supply the deficiency of the sword."

"Halt there!" said Porthos, coming forward: "I begin, if you please, and without saying any more about it."

"Allow me, Porthos," said Aramis.

Athos did not sir. He might have been taken for a statue. His respiration even appeared to be suspended.

"Gentlemen, gentlemen," said d'Artagnan, "be quiet: you will have your turn. Look at that gentleman's eyes, and read there the blessed hatred with which we have inspired him. See how skilfully he has unsheathed his sword, and admire the circumspection with which he looks around him, to see if there be any obstacle to prevent his breaking away. Well, does not all this prove to you, that M. Mordaunt is a skilful swordsman, and that you will succeed me ere long, provided I permit him? Remain therefore in your places, like Athos, whose quietness I recommend to your imitation, and let me take the initiative in this affair. Besides," said he, drawing his sword with a terrible gesture, "I am more particularly concerned with this gentleman. I wish it, and I will have it so!"

This was the first time that d'Artagnan had used this expression in speaking to his friends. Hitherto he had contented himself with thinking it.

Porthos drew back, Aramis put his sword under his arm, and Athos remained motionless in his dark corner, where he kept himself, not calm, as d'Artagnan said, but choking and palpitating.

"Return your sword to its scabbard, chevalier," said d'Artagnan to Aramis; "else this gentleman might fancy you had intentions which you do not entertain."

Then turning towards Mordaunt, "Sir," said he, "I await you."

"And I, gentlemen, cannot but admire you. You argue about who shall fight me, but you do not consult me on the point—me, whom the affair slightly concerns, I believe. I hate you all, it is true, but in different degrees. I hope to kill you all; but I have more chance of killing the first than the second, the second than the third, and the third than the fourth. I claim, therefore, the right of choosing my adversary. Should you deny me this right, kill me—I will not fight."

The four friends looked at each other.

"It is just," said Porthos and Aramis, who hoped that the choice would fall upon them.

Athos and d'Artagnan said nothing; but even their silence was consent.

"Well, then," said Mordaunt, in the midst of the profound and solemn silence that reigned in this mysterious house—"well, then, I choose for my first adversary him who, not thinking himself longer worthy of being called the Count de la Fère, has assumed the name of Athos."

Athos arose from his seat, as if a spring had been placed under his feet; but, to the astonishment of his friends, after a moment's immobility and silence, "M. Mordaunt," said he, shaking his head, "all contest between us is impossible: give to some other the honour you destined for me." And he resumed his seat.

"Ah!" said Mordaunt, "there is already one who is afraid."

"A thousand thunders!" exclaimed d'Artagnan, bounding towards the young man, "who dares to say here, that Athos is afraid?"

"Let him say what he likes," said Athos, with a smile, full of sorrow and contempt.

"And is this your decision, Athos?" demanded the Gascon.

"Irrevocable," said Athos.

"Very well; then we will say no more about it."

Then turning towards Mordaunt: "you have heard sir," said he, "that the Count de la Fère does not wish to have the honour of fighting you. Choose amongst us the one who is to take his place."

"As I do not fight him," replied Mordaunt, "it is of little consequence to me whom I fight. Put your names into a hat, and I will draw one out at hazard."

"That is an idea!" said d'Artagnan.

"In fact, this method reconciles everything," replied Aramis.

"I should not have thought of it," said Porthos; "and yet it is very simple."

"Come, Aramis," said d'Artagnan, "write this for us in that pretty little hand in which you wrote to Mary Michon, to inform her that this gentleman's mother wished to have the Duke of Buckingham assassinated."

Mordaunt bore this fresh attack without wincing. He was standing up, with his arms crossed, and appeared as calm as a man could be under such circumstances. If it was not courage, it was at least pride, which much resembles it.

Aramis went to Cromwell's bureau, tore three pieces of paper of equal size, wrote his own name on the first, and the names of his companions on the two others, held them open towards Mordaunt, who, without reading them, made a sign with his head that he was satisfied; then, having rolled them up, he put them into a hat, and presented them to the young man. He thrust his hand into the hat, drew out one of the papers, which he let fall contemptuously on the table, without reading it.

"Ah, serpent!" murmured d'Artagnan, "I would give all my chances of being captain of musketeers, that this bulletin might contain my name!"

Aramis opened the paper; but whatever serenity or coolness he might affect, his voice perceptibly shook with hatred and anxiety.

"D'Artagnan!" he read, in a loud voice.

D'Artagnan uttered an exclamation of joy. "Ah!" said he, "there is, then, justice in heaven!"

Then turning towards Mordaunt—"I hope, sir," said he, "that you have no objection to make?"

"None whatever, sir," replied Mordaunt, drawing his sword in turn, and resting the point on his boot.

The moment d'Artagnan was quite certain that his wish was accomplished, and that his man could not escape him, he resumed all his calmness, all his serenity, and, indeed, all the deliberation that he was accustomed to exhibit in his preparations for so serious an affair as a duel. He turned up the cuffs of his sleeves properly, and stamped the sole of his right foot on the ground; which did not, however, prevent his remarking, for the second time, that Mordaunt cast a very singular glance around him, such as he had once before detected.

"Are you ready, sir," said he, at length

"I am waiting for you, sir," replied Mordaunt, raising his head, and looking at d'Artagnan with an expression impossible to describe.

"Then take care of yourself, sir," said the Gascon, "for I handle the sword pretty well."

"And I also," said Mordaunt.

"So much the better; it will tranquillize my conscience. On guard!"

"One moment," said the young man: "give me your word, gentlemen, that you will only attack me successively."

"Is it merely to have the pleasure of insulting us, you little viper, that you make this request?" demanded Porthos.

"No; it is, as this gentleman said just now, to tranquillize my conscience."

"It must be for something else," murmured d'Artagnan, shaking his head, and looking around him with some anxiety.

"By the word of a gentleman," said Aramis and Porthos, at the same time.

"In that case, gentlemen," said Mordaunt, "draw yourselves up in some corner, like the Count de la Fère, who, if he does not wish to fight, at any rate seems to me to understand the rules of combat, and give us space, for we shall want it."

"So let it be," said Aramis.

"What a monstrous fuss!" said Porthos.

"Draw aside, gentlemen," said d'Artagnan: we must not leave the smallest excuse to justify this gentleman in behaving ill; which, saving the respect I have for him, I must say he seems much inclined to do.

This fresh raillery fell harmless on Mordaunt's impenetrable countenance."

Porthos and Aramis drew themselves up in a corner, on the same side as Athos, so that the champions occupied the middle of the room; that is to say, they were in the full light, the two lamps that illumined the scene standing on Cromwell's desk.

"Come," said d'Artagnan, "are you ready at last, sir?"

"I am," said Mordaunt.

Both at the same time made one step forward, and by this movement their swords became engaged. D'Artagnan was too distinguished a swordsman to amuse himself, (in the language of the school,) by feeling for his adversary. He made a brilliant and rapid feint, which was parried by Mordaunt.

"Aha!" said he, with a smile of satisfaction. And without wasting time, thinking that he saw an opening, he made a direct thrust, rapid and glancing, like lightning.

Mordaunt parried a counter en carte, so close that it would not have gone through a young lady's ring.

"I begin to think that we are going to have some amusement," said d'Artagnan.

"Yes," murmured Aramis; "but, in amusing yourself, do not fence wide."

"Zounds, my friend," said Porthos, "take care!"

It was now Mordaunt's turn to smile.

"Ah, sir," said d'Artagnan, "what a rascally smile you have! It was the devil who taught you to smile in that manner—was it not?"

Mordaunt made no other reply than endeavouring to twist his sword in that of d'Artagnan, with a force that the Gascon did not expect to find in a frame apparently so weak. But, thanks to a parry as skilful as that which his adversary had just executed, he

met Mordaunt's sword in time, and it glided along his own without encountering his breast.

Mordaunt made a rapid step in retreat.

"Ah! you break away," said d'Artagnan, "you turn! As you please. I shall gain something by it: I no longer see your rascally face. Here, I am entirely in the shade: you have no idea what a false look you have, sir, particularly when you are frightened. Observe my eyes a little, and you will there see what your glass never shows you—a loyal and a frank look."

Mordaunt, at this flow of words, which was not perhaps in the best taste, but which was customary with d'Artagnan, whose principle it was to engage his adversary's attention, did not answer a single word; but he broke away, and, still turning, at last completely changed places with d'Artagnan. He smiled more and more; and this smile began to annoy the Gascon.

"Come, come, it is necessary to put a finish to this," said d'Artagnan. "The scoundrel has muscles of iron. We must come to home-thrusts!"

And in turn he pressed upon Mordaunt, who still continued to break away, but evidently on a plan, without making a single fault of which d'Artagnan could take advantage, without his sword swerving one instant from the proper line. And yet, as the contest was in a room, and there was a want of space for the combatants, Mordaunt's foot soon touched the wall, against which he rested his left hand.

"Ah!" said d'Artagnan, "this time you cannot break away, my fine friend! Gentlemen," said he, compressing his lips, and with a terrible frown, "did you ever see a scorpion nailed to a wall? No? Well, then, you shall soon see it."

And in one second d'Artagnan made three terrible thrusts at Mordaunt: each of them touched, but only grazed him. D'Artagnan could not understand this force. The three friends looked on in the greatest trepidation, with perspiration on their brows.

At last d'Artagnan, engaged too closely, in turn took one step back to prepare his fourth thrust, or rather to execute it; for fencing

was, with d'Artagnan, like chess, a vast combination, the details of which harmonized with each other. But at the very moment when, with greater violence than ever, he threw himself upon his adversary—at that very instant, when, after a close and rapid feint, he rushed forward quick as lightning, the wall appeared to split asunder, Mordaunt disappeared through the yawning aperture, and d'Artagnan's sword, caught between the two panels, snapped off as if it had been glass.

D'Artagnan recoiled, and the wall closed again.

Mordaunt, whilst defending himself, had manœuvred so as to bring his back against the secret door by which we have seen Cromwell leave the room. Having accomplished this, he had felt for the knob with his left hand, and had then disappeared, as the evil genii vanish in the theatre, who have the power of making their way through walls.

The Gascon uttered a furious imprecation; to which, on the other side of the iron panel, a savage laugh responded—a funereal laugh, that made a shudder pervade even the veins of the sceptical Aramis.

"Here, gentlemen, here!" cried d'Artagnan: "let us break open this door."

"It is the devil himself!" said Aramis, running up at his friend's call.

"He has escaped us!—he has escaped us!" shouted Porthos, applying his vast shoulder to the door, which, secured by the spring, did not move.

"So much the better," murmured Athos hoarsely.

"I suspected this, by Jove!" said d'Artagnan, exhausting himself in fruitless efforts: "I suspected it. When the wretch looked round the room, I foresaw some infamous manœuvre; I guessed that he was laying some plan—but who could have imagined this?"

"It is a fearful misfortune that his friend the devil sends us," said Aramis.

"It is a manifest blessing, sent by God?" said Athos, with evident delight.

"Really," said d'Artagnan, shrugging his shoulders, and giving

up the door, that decidedly would not open—"you are becoming imbecile, Athos! How can you say such things, to such men as we are? Zounds! do you not understand our situation?"

"What then? what situation?" demanded Porthos.

"At this game, whoever does not kill, is killed," replied d'Artagnan. "See now, my dear fellow, does it enter into your expiatory jeremiads, that M. Mordaunt is sacrificing us to his filial piety? If you think so, tell me candidly."

"Oh, d'Artagnan, my friend!"

"Really, it is quite pitiable to view things in this light! The wretch will send us a hundred Ironsides, who will pound us in this mortar of Cromwell's like grain. Come, come! Away, away! If we remain five minutes longer here, it is all over with us."

"Yes, you are right: let us be off!" said Athos and Aramis.

"And where shall we go?" demanded Porthos.

"To the hotel, my dear friend, to get our baggage and horses; and from thence, should it please God, to France, where, at any rate, I understand the architecture of the houses. Our vessel is waiting for us; and, in truth, it is fortunate that it is so."

And d'Artagnan, joining example to precept, thrust the stump of his sword into the scabbard, picked up his hat, opened the door leading to the staircase, and went rapidly down, followed by his three companions.

At the door the fugitives found their lacqueys, and inquired whether they knew anything about Mordaunt; but they had not seen him leave the house.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE FELUCCA L'ECLAIR.

D'Artagnan had guessed aright. Mordaunt had no time to lose, and he lost none: he knew the rapidity of decision and action peculiar to his enemies, and determined to act accordingly himself.

This time the musketeers had found an adversary quite worthy of them.

After having carefully closed the door behind him, Mordaunt glided through the subterranean passage; but whilst he sheathed his useless sword, and was approaching the neighbouring house, he stopped to examine himself, and to recover his breath.

"Good!" said he; "it is nothing — almost nothing — mere scratches: one on the breast, and two on the arm. The wounds I give are rather better. Let them ask the executioner of Bethune, my uncle de Winter, and King Charles. Now, there is not one moment to lose; for if that be lost, perhaps they will be saved; and they must die, all four together, by one single blow, destroyed by the thunder of man, for want of that of God. They must disappear —shattered, annihilated, dispersed in atoms. Let me run, then, till my limbs break, till my heart bursts in my bosom: but I must arrive before them!"

And Mordaunt began to walk at a rapid, but more equal pace, towards the first cavalry barracks, about a quarter of a league off: this quarter of a league he accomplished in four or five minutes. Having reached the barracks, he made himself known, took the best horse in the stables, leaped upon it, and took the road. In a quarter of an hour he reached Greenwich.

"There is the port," he murmured: "that dark spot down there is the Isle of Dogs. Well, I am half an hour before them—perhaps an hour. Fool that I was! I have been near bursting myself by my silly precipitation, Now," said he, standing up in his stirrups, that he might see as far as possible amongst the numerous masts— "*l'Eclair*? where is *l'Eclair*?"

As he mentally pronounced this word, and as if to respond to his thought, a man, laid upon a coil of ropes, rose up, and came towards him. Mordaunt drew his handkerchief from his pocket, and allowed it to float a moment in the air. The man appeared to notice it, but remained stationary, without moving backwards or forwards. Mordaunt made a knot at each of the corners of his handkerchief; on seeing which, the man came up to him. It may be remembered, that this was the signal agreed upon. The sailor

was enveloped in a large rough boat-cloak, that concealed his figure and face.

"Sir," said the mariner, "perhaps you may be come from London to take a trip to sea?"

"Expressly for that purpose," replied Mordaunt, "and to sail from near the Isle of Dogs."

"Doubtless you have some preference, sir? You would like one vessel better than another? You would wish for a good sailing vessel—one that was swift?——"

"Like *l'Eclair*," replied Mordaunt.

"Very well. Then mine is the very vessel you are looking for. I am its master."

"I begin to think so," said Mordaunt, "especially if you have not forgotten a certain signal."

"Here it is, sir," replied the sailor, drawing from the pocket of his boat-cloak a handkerchief knotted at the four corners.

"Good, good!" exclaimed Mordaunt, leaping from his horse. "Now, then, there is no time to lose. Send my horse to the nearest inn, and conduct me to your vessel."

But your companions?" said the mariner. "I thought that there were four of you, without reckoning the lacqueys."

"Listen," said Mordaunt, going close to the mariner: "I am not the person you are waiting for, as you are not the person they hope to find. You have taken the place of Captain Rogers, have you not? You are here by the order of General Cromwell; and I also come from him."

"In fact," said the master, "I know you. You are Captain Mordaunt."

Mordaunt started.

"Oh! do not be frightened," said the mariner, lowering his boat-cloak, and discovering his countenance: "I am a friend."

"Captain Groslow!" exclaimed Mordaunt.

"The same. The general remembered that I had been an officer of the navy, and gave me charge of this expedition. Is there anything changed?"

"Nothing; on the contrary, everything remains as it was before."

"Because, for a moment, I thought that the king's death——"

"The king's death has only made them hasten their flight. In a quarter of an hour, nay in ten minutes, they will probably be here."

'Then what are you come for?"

"To embark with you."

"Ah! does the general doubt my zeal?"

"No; but I wish myself to assist in my revenge. Can you find no one to relieve me of my horse?"

Groslow whistled, and a sailor made his appearance.

"Patrick," said Groslow, "lead this horse to the nearest inn. Should you be asked to whom it belongs, say to an Irish gentleman."

The sailor went off, without saying a word.

"Now," said Mordaunt," are you not afraid that they may recognise you."

"There is no danger in this dress, covered by this boat-cloak, and in this dark night. You yourself did not discover me: they are, therefore, much less likely to do so." ¶

"It is true," said Mordaunt. "Besides, they will never think of you. Everything is ready, is it not?'

"Yes."

"The cargo is on board?"

"Yes."

"Five barrels, full?"

"And fifty empty."

"That is right."

"We are carrying port wine to Anvers."

"Excellent. Now take me on board, and return to your post, for they will soon be here."

"I am ready."

"It is of the utmost importance that none of your men should see me enter the vessel."

"I have only one man on board, and I am sure of him as of myself. Besides, this man does not know you; and, like his companions, he is ready to obey me; but he is ignorant of everything."

"That is well. Come along."

They then went down to the Thames. A little boat was moored to the bank, by an iron chain, fixed to a stake. Groslow pulled the boat towards [him, steadied it whilst Mordaunt got in, then jumped in himself, and seizing the oars, he began to row in a style which not only proved that he had not forgotten his old business of a sailor, but also convinced Mordaunt that he had spoken the truth.

In about five minutes, they had got clear of that crowd of ships which even then encumbered the approach to London; and Mordaunt could perceive, like a dark spot, the little vessel riding at anchor, about four or five cables' length from the Isle of Dogs. On approaching *l'Eclair*, Groslow whistled in a peculiar manner, and they saw the head of a man make its appearance above the railing.

"Is it you, captain?" demanded the man.

"Yes; lower the ladder."

And Groslow, passing light and swift as a swallow under the bowsprit, ranged himself alongside of the vessel.

"Get up." said he to his companion.

Mordaunt, without answering, seized the rope, and climbed up the side of the vessel with an activity and firmness not common to landsmen. But his desire of vengeance made up for his want of practice, and rendered him fit for anything.

As Groslow had foreseen, the sailor on board did not appear even to remark that his captain retured with a companion.

Mordaunt and Groslow went towards the captain's cabin. It was a temporary one, erected on the deck. The state-cabin had been given up to his passengers by Captain Rogers.

"And they?" demanded Mordaunt, "which is theirs?"

"At the other end of the vessel," replied Groslow.

"And have they nothing to do on this side?"

"Absolutely nothing."

"Excellent! I will keep myself concealed in your cabin. Do you return to Greenwich, and bring them back. You have got a boat?"

"That in which we came here."

'She appeared to me to be light, and well built."

"A regular canoe."

"Fasten her to the stern with a rope, put some oars into her, and let her follow in our wake, that we may have nothing to do but to cut the rope. Provide a supply of rum and biscuits; for should the sea chance to be rough, the men will not be sorry to have something at hand to refresh them."

"It shall be done as you wish. Would you like to visit the powder magazine?"

"Not until you return. I wish to place the match myself, that I may be sure that it will not burn long. Above all, conceal your face, that they may not discover you."

"Do not disturb yourself about that."

"Go, then: it is now striking ten by Greenwich."

In fact, the sound of a clock striking came solemnly through the air, which was charged with heavy clouds, rolling along the sky like silent billows.

Groslow closed the door, which Mordaunt fastened inside; and after having charged the sailor to keep a good look-out, he went down into his boat, which rapidly left the ship. When Groslow reached Greenwich, the wind was cold, and the jetty was deserted: several vessels had just sailed with the full tide. At the very moment that Groslow set his foot on land, he heard something like the gallop of horses on the road.

"Faith!" said he, "Mordaunt was right to hurry me. There was no time to lose. Here they are."

It was our friends, or rather their vanguard, composed of d'Artagnan and Athos. Having come opposite the spot where Groslow was standing, they stopped, as if they guessed that he whom they expected was there. Athos dismounted, and quietly unrolled a handkerchief, knotted at the four corners, which he permitted to float in the air; whilst d'Artagnan, always cautious, remained leaning down on his horse, with his hand buried in his holster.

Groslow, yet in doubt whether the horsemen were really those he expected, had squatted himself down behind one of those posts, fixed on the shore, to which vessels are frequently moored; but

when he saw the signal, he arose, and went towards the gentlemen. He was so completely muffled up in his boat cloak, that it was quite impossible to see his countenance. Besides, the night was so dark, that even this precaution was superfluous. And yet Athos's piercing eye discovered, in spite of the obscurity, that it was not Rogers who was before him.

"What do you want with me?" said he to Groslow, stepping backward.

"I wish to tell you, my lord," replied Groslow, assuming the Irish accent, "that you are looking for Captain Rogers, but that you will look for him in vain."

"How is that?" said Athos.

"Because this morning he fell from the topmast, and broke his leg. But I am his cousin: he has imparted all the affair to me, and has charged me to look out for him, and to conduct to whatever place they wish, the gentlemen who should bring me a handkerchief knotted at the four corners, like that which you hold in your hand, and that which I have in my pocket." And so saying, Groslow drew from his pocket the handkerchief that he had already shown Mordaunt.

"Is that all?" demanded Athos.

"No, my lord; for there are also seventy-five pounds promised if I land you safe and sound at Boulogne, or on any other part of the coast of France that you may prefer."

"What do you say to all this, d'Artagnan?" demanded Athos, in French.

"First inform me what he says?" replied d'Artagnan.

"Ah, that's true," said Athos; "I forgot that you do not understand English." And he repeated to d'Artagnan the conversation he had had with the captain.

"This appears to me to be probable enough," said the Gascon.

"And to me, also," said Athos.

"Besides," said d'Artagnan, "should this man deceive us, we can at any time blow out his brains."

"And who will then pilot the vessel?"

"You, Athos: you know so many things, that I have no doubt you can navigate a ship."

"Faith, my friend," said Athos with a smile, "even whilst jesting, you have nearly hit upon the truth. I was originally destined for the sea, and have some vague notions of navigation."

"There now, do you see!" said d'Artagnan.

"Go for our friends, then, d'Artagnan. It is eleven o'clock, and there is no time to lose."

D'Artagnan went towards two horsemen, who, pistol in hand, were on the look-out in the road, near the first houses of the town; whilst at at a short distance from them, three more horsemen appeared to be keeping guard.

The two sentinels in the middle of the road were Porthos and Aramis, and the other three were Mousqueton, Blaisois, and Grimaud. The last, however, on looking more closely at him, was double: behind him, on the crupper, he carried Parry, who was to return to London with the horses, which had been sold to the host to pay the expenses at his house. Thanks to this commercial stroke, the four friends had brought away with them a sum, which, if not very considerable, was at least sufficient to provide against delays or emergencies.

D'Artagnan communicated Athos's request to his friends, who directed their lacqueys to dismount, and unstrap their portmanteaus.

Parry left his friends with regret: they had wished him to accompany them to France, but this he had obstinately refused to do.

"It is very obvious," said Mousqueton, "that he is thinking of Groslow."

It will be remembered that it was Groslow who had cut open his head.

The little troop rejoined Athos. But d'Artagnan had already resumed his natural distrust: he thought the quay too much deserted, the night too dark, and the captain too civil. He had recounted to Aramis the incident we have just mentioned; and Aramis not less, doubtful than himself, had not slightly augmented his suspicions.

A gentle clicking of the tongue against his teeth, revealed the Gascon's anxiety to Athos.

"We have no time for hesitation and doubt," said Athos, "the boat awaits us: let us embark.

"Besides," said Aramis, "what is there to prevent our embarking and being vigilant at the same time? We can watch the captain."

"And if he does not go right, I will knock him down, that's all!"

"Well said, Porthos," replied d'Artagnan. "Get in, then. Lead the way, Mousqueton."

And d'Artagnan stopped his friends, making the laoqueys precede them, that they might test the safety of the plank that led from the jetty to the boat.

The three valets passed along it without accident. Athos followed them; then Porthos, and then Aramis; d'Artagnan brought up the rear, all the time shaking his head.

"What the devil is the matter with you, my friend?" said Porthos. "Upon my soul you would make even a Cæsar afraid."

"The matter is," replied d'Artagnan, "that I see at this port, neither inspector, sentinel, or custom-house officer."

"And do you complain of that, d'Artagnan?" said Porthos: "all is as pleasant as a bank strewed with flowers."

"All goes on too well, Porthos. But never mind—we must trust in God!"

The moment the plank was withdrawn, the captain seated himself at the rudder, and made a sign to one of the sailors, who, with a boat-hook, began to pilot them through the labyrinth of vessels by which they were surrounded. The other sailor was already on the larboard side, with his oar in his hand, and his companion having also taken his oar, the boat rapidly glided through the water.

"At last we are off," said Porthos.

"Alas!" ejaculated the Count de la Fère, "we depart alone!"

"Yes, but we are all four together, and without even a scratch: that is some consolation."

"We are not yet on board," said d'Artagnan, "beware of collisions!"

"Ah, my dear fellow," said Porthos, "you are like the crows—

you always sing of misfortune. Who could meet us on such a dark night as this, when one cannot see twenty yards forward."

"Yes, but to-morrow morning," said d'Artagnan.

"To-morrow morning we shall be at Boulogne."

"I hope so, with all my heart," replied the Gascon, "and I confess my weakness. Listen, Athos: you will laugh; but as long as we were within gun-shot of the jetty, or the vessels alongside of it, I expected some frightful volley that would annihilate us all."

"But," said Porthos, with his rough good sense, "the thing was impossible; for the captain and his sailors would have been killed at the same time."

"Bah! That would have been a mighty affair for Mordaunt! Do you suppose that he calculates to such a nicety as that?"

"At any rate," said Porthos, "I am very glad that d'Artagnan confesses that he is afraid."

"Not only do I confess it, but I boast of it. I am not such a rhinoceros as you are. Halloo, what is that?"

"*L'Eclair*," said the captain.

"We are arrived, then?" said Athos, in English.

"We shall be in a moment," replied the captain.

A few more strokes of the oar brought them alongside of the little vessel. The sailor had seen the boat, and was in waiting with the ladder. Athos mounted first, with the skill of a complete sailor; Aramis, with the habit he had long acquired of mounting rope-ladders, and of passing into forbidden places by means more or less ingenious; d'Artagnan, like a chamois-hunter; and Porthos, by that development of physical strength, that in all cases made up with him for other defects.

With the lacqueys, the operation was somewhat more difficult; not as regarded Grimaud, however, who, a kind of cat in a gutter, meagre and lank, always found means to hoist himself up anywhere; but for Mousqueton and Blaisois, whom the sailors were obliged to lift in their arms within reach of Porthos's hand, who, seizing them by the collar of their jackets, placed them standing upright on the deck of the vessel.

The captain led his passengers to their cabin, which they were to

use in common. He then prepared to leave them, under the pretence of having some orders to give.

"One minute," said d'Artagnan. "How many men have you on board, master?"

"I do not understand," he replied, in English

"Ask him in his own language, Athos?"

Athos put the question, as d'Artagnan had desired.

"Three men," replied Groslow, "without reckoning myself."

D'Artagnan understood this; for, whilst answering, the captain had raised three fingers.

"Oh!" said d'Artagnan, "three: I begin to regain my confidence. Never mind: whilst you settle yourselves, I will take a survey of the vessel."

"And I," said Porthos, "will go and see what there is for supper."

"That is a noble and generous project, Porthos: put it into execution. You, Athos, lend me Grimaud, who, by keeping company with his friend Parry, has learnt to jabber some sort of English: he will serve as my interpreter."

"Go, Grimaud," said Athos.

There was a lantern on deck. D'Artagnan took it up with one hand, put a pistol in the other, and said to the captain—"Come!"

D'Artagnan gained the hatchway, and went down to the middle deck, which was divided into three compartments: that into which d'Artagnan had descended, which might extend from the third mast to the extremity of the poop, and was, consequently, covered by the planks of the cabin in which Athos, Aramis, and Porthos were making their preparations for the night; the second, which occupied the centre of the vessel, and which was intended for the berth of the lacqueys; the third, that extended under the prow, that is to say, under the temporary cabin of the captain, where Mordaunt was concealed.

"Oh! oh!" said d'Artagnan, descending the hatchway, and holding the lantern before him at arm's length: "what a number of barrels! One might fancy himself in the cavern of Ali Baba."

The Thousand and One Nights had just been translated for the first time, and were very popular at that period.

"What do you say?" demanded the captain, in English.

D'Artagnan understood him by the intonation of his voice.

"I wish to know what there is in these barrels," demanded d'Artagnan, setting the lantern on to one of the casks.

The captain made a motion, as if he would remount the ladder, but constrained himself.

"Oporto," he replied.

"Oh! wine of Oporto?" said d'Artagnan. "That is a comfort; after all, we shall not die of thirst."

Then, turning towards Groslow, who was wiping the large drops of perspiration from his brow—"Are they full?" said he.

Grimaud translated the question.

"Some are full, and some empty," replied Groslow, in a voice which, in spite of all his efforts, betrayed his trepidation.

"D'Artagnan struck against the barrels with his knuckles, and found five full, and the rest empty. He then introduced his lantern into the spaces between the barrels, to the great terror of the Englishman, and discovered that these spaces were unoccupied.

"Come, let us proceed," said he. And he went towards the door that led to the second compartment.

'Wait," said the Englishman, who had remained behind, still labouring under the agitation that we have described—"wait; I have got the key of that door."

And passing quickly before d'Artagnan and Grimaud, he introduced the key into the lock with a trembling hand, and they found themselves in the second compartment, where Mousqueton and Blaisois were preparing supper. There was evidently nothing here to examine or find fault with: all the nooks and corners were distinctly perceptible, being illumined by the lamp that lighted these worthy companions.

They passed on quickly, and visited the third compartment. This was the sailors' cabin. Three or four hammocks suspended from the ceiling, a table, fastened by a double rope fixed to its two extremities, and two worm-eaten and rickety benches, composed

all the furniture. D'Artagnan raised two or three bits of old sails, hung against the walls, and seeing nothing suspicious, he regained the deck by the hatchway.

"And this cabin?" he demanded.

Grimaud translated these words of the musketeer into English.

"This cabin is mine," replied the captain: "would you like to go into it?"

"Open the door," said d'Artagnan.

The Englishman obeyed. D'Artagnan thrust out his arm, with the lantern, poked his head into the half-opened door, and seeing that this cabin was a regular hole—"Good!" said he; "if there is an army on board, it is not here that it can be concealed. Come, let us see whether Porthos has found any supper."

And thanking the captain with a nod, he rejoined his friends in the state-cabin.

Porthos had found nothing; or, at all events, if he had been successful, fatigue had conquered hunger; for, wrapped in his cloak, he was sleeping soundly when d'Artagnan returned.

Athos and Aramis, rocked by the gentle motion of the first waves of the sea, were also just beginning to close their eyes; but they opened them at the noise made by the entrance of their companion.

"Well?" inquired Aramis

"All is right," answered d'Artagnan, "and we may sleep in tranquillity."

On this assurance, Aramis let his head fall again; Athos made an affectionate sign; and d'Artagnan, who, like Porthos, had more need of sleep than of food, dismissed Grimaud, and laid down in his cloak, with his sword drawn, and in such a posture that he barred the passage; so that it was impossible to enter the cabin, without in some way disturbing him.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE WINE OF OPORTO.

In about ten minutes, the masters were fast asleep; but it was not the case with the hungry and yet more thirsty valets. Blaisois and Mousqueton set about preparing their bed, which consisted of a plank and a valise; whilst on a table, suspended like that in the adjoining cabin, swung to and fro, with the motion of the sea, a loaf of bread, a pot of beer, and three glasses.

"Cursed motion!" said Blaisois. "I see that it is going to treat me just as it did when I came here."

"And then to have nothing to oppose to the sea-sickness," responded Mousqueton, "but barley bread and *hop* wine! Faugh!"

"But your wicker bottle, M. Mouston?" demanded Blaisois, who had just finished the preparations for his dormitory, and now came staggering up to the table, before which Mousqueton had already placed himself, and where he at length managed to sit down—"but your wicker bottle: have you lost it?"

"No," replied Mousqueton; "but Parry kept it. Those devils of Scotsmen are always thirsty. And you, Grimaud," demanded Mousqueton of his companion, who just then came in, after having accompanied d'Artagnan in his survey, "are you thirsty?"

"As a Scotsman," laconically replied Grimaud. And he seated himself near Blaisois and Mousqueton, drew an account-book from his pocket, and began to settle the accounts of the fraternity, of which he was the steward.

"Oh! there, there!" exclaimed Blaisois: "now my stomach begins to rumble."

"If that is the case," said Mosqueton, in a medical tone, "take a little nourishment."

"And do you call that nourishment?" said Blaisois, accompanying a most piteous look with a disdainful motion of his finger, as it pointed to the barley bread, and the pot of beer.

"Blaisois," replied Mousqueton, "do you not remember, that

bread is the genuine nourishment of the French, and that the French always have some of it? Ask Grimaud."

"Yes—but the beer," replied Blaisois, with a promptitude that did honour to the quickness of his spirit of repartee—"but the beer—is it their genuine drink?"

"As for that," said Mousqueton, caught in a dilemma, and somewhat puzzled how to answer the question, "I must confess that it is not, and that they have as great an antipathy to beer, as the English have to wine."

"What! M. Mouston," said Blaisois, who this time doubted Mousqueton's profound knowledge, although, in the ordinary affairs of life, he greatly admired it—"what! M. Mouston, do not the English like wine?"

"They detest it."

"But yet I have seen them drink it."

"As a penance; and the proof is," continued Mousqueton, bridling up, "that an English prince died one day because they put him into a tub of malmsey. I have heard the Abbé d'Herblay recount the fact."

The imbecile!" cried Blaisois: "I wish I were now in his place."

"You can be," said Grimaud, all the time casting up his figures.

"How so?" demanded Blaisois. "I can be?"

"Yes," replied Grimaud, carrying four, and adding it to the next column.

"I can be? Explain yourself, M. Grimaud."

Mousqueton kept silence during Blaisois's questions; but it was easy to see, by the expression of his countenance, that it was not through indifference.

Grimaud continued his calculation, and summed up his total.

"Porto!" he then said, stretched out his hand in the direction of the first compartment visited by d'Artagnan and himself, in company with the captain.

"What! Those barrels which I saw through the half-opened door?"

"Porto!" repeated Grimaud, who had commenced a fresh arithmetical calculation.

"I have heard it said," replied Blaisois, addressing himself to Mousqueton, "that Porto is excellent Spanish wine."

"Excellent," said Mousqueton, passing the end of his tongue over his lips. "There is some in the Baron de Bracieux's cellar."

"If we were to request those Englishmen to sell us a bottle?" demanded honest Blaisois.

"Sell!" exclaimed Mousqueton, recalled to his ancient marauding tendencies. "It is plain enough, young man, that you have yet but little experience inthe affairs of life. Why should you buy, when you can take?"

"Take!" said Blaisois—"covet your neighbour's goods! It seems to me that the thing is forbidden."

"Where?" demanded Mousqueton.

"In the commandments of God, or of the church, I know not which; but what I do know, is, that it is said—thou shalt not covet the goods of another—nor his spouse."

"There, now, is a childish reason, M. Blaisois," said Mousqueton, in his most patronising tone. "Yes, I repeat it—childish. Where have you ever seen in the Scriptures, I ask you, that the English are our neighbours?"

"Nowhere—that is true," replied Blaisois; "at least, I cannot remember it."

"A childish reason, I again repeat," continued Mousqueton. "If you had made war ten years, like Grimaud and me, my dear Blaisois, you would know how to make a distinction between the goods of your neighbour, and those of an enemy. Now, an Englishman is an enemy, I think; and this wine of Porto belongs to the English: therefore it now belongs to us, since we are Frenchmen. Do you not know the proverb—so much taken from an enemy?"

This morsel of eloquence, supported by all the authority that Mousqueton drew from his long experience, quite astounded Blaisois. He lowered his eyes, as if to collect his faculties; and then suddenly raising his head, like a man armed with an irresistible argument—

'But the masters," said he: "will they be of your opinion, M. Mouston ?"

Mousqueton smiled with disdain. "A mighty fine thing, indeed," said he, "would it be for me to go and disturb the rest of these illustrious nobles, to say to them, 'Gentlemen, your servant Mouston is thirsty—would you allow him to drink ?' What does it signify to M. de Bracieux, I ask you, whether I am thirsty or not ?'

"It is a very dear kind of wine," said Blaisois, shaking his head.

"If it were potable gold, M. Blaisois," replied Mousqueton, "our masters would not debar themselves of it. Learn that the Baron de Bracieux is alone rich enough to drink a tun of porto, if he were obliged to pay a pistole a drop for it. Now I do not see," continued Mousqueton, becoming more and more magniloquent in his pride, "since the masters do not refrain from it, why the valets should refrain either."

And Mousqueton, rising up, took the pot of beer, every drop of which he emptied into the scupper-hole, and then stalked majestically to the door that led to the other compartment.

"Ah! fastened!" said he. "These devils of English—how suspicious they are!"

"Fastened !" said Blaisois, in a tone of disappointment, not less acute than that of Mousqueton. "Ah! plague take it! it is unlucky; especially as I feel my stomach rumble more and more."

Mousqueton turned towards Blaisois with such a piteous countenance, that it was evident he completely shared the disappointment of the brave fellow.

"Fastened !" he repeated.

"But," hazarded Blaisois, "I have heard you relate, M. Mouston, that once in your youth, at Chantilly, I think, you supported your master and yourself by taking partridges in a net, carp by a line, and bottles with a lasso."

"Certainly, I did," responded Mousqueton; "it is the exact truth, and Grimaud can bear witness to it. But then there was an air-hole to the cellar and the wine was in bottles. I cannot throw

the lasso through this partition, nor draw to me with a packthread, a cask of wine that may perhaps weigh two hundred weight."

"No; but you may raise two or three planks of the partition wall," said Blaisois, "and make a hole in one of the barrels with a gimlet."

Monsqueton opened his eyes immeasurably wide, and looking at Blaisois, like a man who was quite astonished at meeting with qualities in another, for which he had not given him credit—"It is true," said he; "that might be done; but a chisel is wanted to start the boards, and a gimlet to pierce the barrel?"

"The case!" said Grimaud, who had just finished balancing his accounts.

"Ah, yes! the case!" said Mousqueton: "that I should not have thought of it!"

Grimaud, in fact, was not only the steward of the troop, but also its armourer; and, besides an account-book, he had a case. Now, as Grimaud was an extremely cautious and provident man, this case, carefully rolled up in his valise, was furnished with every instrument of ordinary necessity. It therefore contained a gimlet of a reasonable size. Mousqueton seized it

As for a chisel, he had not far to seek for one: the poignard he carried at his girdle would be an excellent substitute for it. Mousqueton now sought for a corner where the boards were a little separated, which he had not much difficulty in finding, and set to work forthwith.

Blaisois watched his proceedings with admiration, mingled with impatience, venturing an occasional observation, replete with intelligence and lucidity, on the mode of unfastening a nail, or applying a lever. In a very short time, Mousqueton had started three planks.

"There!" said Blaisois.

Mousqueton was the exact antipodes of the frog in the fable, which thought itself larger than it really was. Unfortunately, although he had managed to diminish his name by one-third, it was not the same with his paunch. He endeavoured to pass through the opening that he had made, but perceived with grief that he must remove two or three more boards at least, to make the hole

commensurate with his size. He heaved a sigh, and drew back to renew his labours.

But Grimaud, who had finished his accounts, had risen up, and being profoundly interested in the operation that was going on, had approached his two companions, and seen the fruitless efforts made by Mousqueton to reach the land of promise.

"I!" said Grimaud.

This single word, from him, was worth a whole sonnet, which alone, as is well known, is worth a whole poem.

Mousqueton turned round. "What, you?" demanded he.

"I will pass through."

"It is true," said Mousqueton, looking at the long, lank figure of his friend; "you will pass, and very easily too."

"That is all right," said Blaisois, "for he knows the full barrels, having been already in the cellar with the Chevalier d'Artagnan. Let M. Grimaud pass through M. Mouston."

"I could have got through as well as Grimaud," said Mousqueton, a little piqued.

"Yes, but it would have taken longer; and, besides that I am very thirsty, I feel my stomach rumbling more and more."

"Go through, then, Grimaud," said Mousqueton, giving to him, who was about to enter upon the expedition in his place, the beer-jug, and the gimlet

"Rinse the glasses," said Grimaud. And giving a friendly nod to Mousqueton, which was intended as a request that he would pardon his finishing an expedition so brilliantly commenced by another, like a long serpent he glided through the opening, and disappeared.

"You will now see," said Mousqueton, looking at Blaisois with an air of superiority, which Blaisois did not attempt to resist—"you will now see, Blaisois, how we old soldiers drink when we are thirsty."

"The cloak," said Grimaud, from the bottom of the hold.

"That is right," said Mousqueton.

"What does he want?" inquired Blaisois

"That we should cover the opening with a cloak."

"What for?" demanded Blaisois.

"Simpleton!" said Mousqueton; "what if any one should come in?"

"Ah! that's true!" exclaimed Blaisois, with still more perceptible admiration: "but he will not be able to see clearly."

"Grimaud always sees clearly," replied Mousqueton, "by night as well as by day."

"He is very fortunate," said Blaisois. "When I have not got a candle, I cannot take two steps without knocking myself against something or other."

"That is because you have not seen service," said Mousqueton: "had that been the case, you would have learnt to pick up a needle in a dungeon. But silence. Some one is coming, I fancy."

Mousqueton gave a low whistle, a signal of alarm familiar to lacqueys in the days of his youth, resumed his place at the table, and made a sign to Blaisois to do the same. Blaisois obeyed.

The door opened, and two men made their appearance, enveloped in their cloaks.

"What!" said one of them, "not yet in bed, at a quarter past eleven? It is contrary to rules. In a quarter of an hour, let every light be extinguished, and every one snoring."

The two men proceeded towards the door of the compartment into which Grimaud had crept, opened the door, entered, and shut it after them.

"Ah!" said Blaisois, shuddering, "he is lost."

"He is a sharp old fox, that Grimaud," muttered Mousqueton.

And they waited with watchful ears and suspended respiration.

Ten minutes glided away, during which they heard no sound that could make them suspect that Grimaud was detected. When this period had elapsed, Mousqueton and Blaisois saw the door re-open. The two men in cloaks came out, closed the door with the same precaution that they had used on entering, and departed, renewing their injunctions to retire to bed, and extinguish the lights.

"Shall we obey?" demanded Blaisois. "All this has a very suspicious aspect, according to my ideas."

"They said in a quarter of an hour—we have yet five minutes," replied Mousqueton.

"If we were to inform our masters of this?"

"Let us wait a moment," said Mousqueton."

"But if they should have killed him?"

"Grimaud would have cried out."

"You know that he is almost dumb."

"Then we must have heard the blow."

"But should he not return?"

"Here he is!"

In fact, at this very moment, Grimaud pushed aside the cloak that concealed the opening, and thrust through that opening a head as pale as death, whose eyes, rounded by terror, offered to the sight a small pupil, in the centre of a large white circle. He held in his hand the beer-jug, full of some sort of substance, came within the range of the light sent forth by the smoky lamp, and murmured the simple monosyllable *Oh!* with an expression of such profound terror, that Mousqueton recoiled in consternation, and Blaisois thought he should have fainted away. Both of them, however, cast a look of curiosity into the jug. It was full of gunpowder!

Once convinced that the vessel was loaded with gunpowder, instead of wine, Grimaud rushed towards the hatchway, and made but one step to the cabin, where the four friends were sleeping. Having reached the cabin, he gently pushed open the door, which, in opening immediately awoke d'Artagnan, who was laid down behind it.

Scarcely had he seen Grimaud's agitated countenance, before he understood that something extraordinary had happened, and was just going to utter an exclamation. But Grimaud, with a motion more rapid than speech itself, placed his finger on his lips; and, with a puff that no one would have suspected from such a meagre body, he blew out the little night lamp at three paces distance.

D'Artagnan raised himself on his elbow. Grimaud put one knee to the ground, and then, with neck stretched out, and all his senses unnaturally excited, he insinuated into his ear a recital, which, to say the truth, was of itself sufficiently dramatic, to need no aid from action, or the play of the features.

During this recital, Athos, Aramis, and Porthos slept like men

who have had no rest for eight nights. In the middle deck, Mousqueton was tying knots in his points* for precaution; whilst Blaisois, overwhelmed with consternation, his hair bristling on his head, endeavoured to do the same thing.

We must now relate what had really occurred.

Scarcely had Grimaud disappeared through the opening, and found himself in the first compartment, before he commenced his search, and soon discovered a barrel. He rapped upon it, and found it empty. He then went to another: that was also empty. But the third on which he tried the experiment, gave forth such a dull sound, that there was no possibility of mistake. Grimaud was sure that it was full. He therefore stopped at this, felt about for a place where he might pierce it with his gimlet, and, whilst feeling, laid his hand upon a spigot.

"Good!" said Grimaud; "this will save me trouble." And he held down the jug, turned the spigot, and felt that the contents were gently gliding from one receptacle to the other.

Grimaud, having first taken the precaution to close the spigot, was just going to raise the jug to his lips, being too conscientious to carry any liquor to his companions for the quality of which he could not answer, when he heard the signal of alarm given by Mousqueton. Suspecting some night round, he glided between two barrels, and concealed himself behind one of the casks. A minute after, the door opened and shut again, after having afforded entrance to two men in cloaks, whom we have seen passing and repassing before Blaisois and Mousqueton, whom they ordered to extinguish their lights.

One of them bore a glass lantern, most carefully closed, and of such a height that the flame could not reach the top. Moreover, the glass itself was covered with a sheet of white paper, which softened, or rather absorbed, both the light and the heat. This man was Groslow.

The other held in his hand something that was long, flexible, and rolled up, like a whitish rope. His head was covered by a very

* This was a superstitious, but common operation, to bring good luck, or to drive away bad luck.—TRANSLATOR.

broad-brimmed hat. Grimaud, thinking that the same feeling as his own had brought them to the hold, and that, like himself, they came to pay a visit to the port wine, squatted himself closer and closer behind his cask, saying to himself, that after all, should he be discovered, the crime was not very great.

Having reached the barrel behind which Grimaud was concealed, the two men stopped.

"Have you got the match?" said he who carried the lantern, in English.

"Here it is," replied the other.

At the last voice, Grimaud started, and felt a shudder penetrate even to the very marrow of his bones. He gently raised himself, so that his head might surmount the top of the cask, and, under the large hat, he discovered the pale face of Mordaunt.

"How long will this match last?" demanded he.

"About five minutes, more or less," said the captain.

This voice also was not unfamiliar to Grimaud. His looks passed from one to the other, and after Mordaunt, he recognised Groslow.

"Then," said Mordaunt, "you must go and warn your men to be ready, without telling them wherefore. Does the boat follow the vessel?"

"As a dog follows its master, at the end of a hempen leash."

"Then, when the clock points to a quarter past twelve, you will collect your men, and will get into the boat, without the least noise."

"After having lighted the match?"

"That is my business. I wish to be certain of my vengeance. Are the oars in the boat?"

"Everything is ready."

"Very good."

"Then all is settled."

Mordaunt knelt down, and fastened one end of his match to the spigot, that he might have nothing more to do than to ignite the other end. Then, having finished this operation, he drew out his watch.

"Did you understand? at a quarter past twelve," he said, rising up: "that is to say, in twenty minutes."

'Perfectly, sir," replied Groslow; "only, I would observe, for the last time, that there is considerable danger in the office you reserve for yourself, and that it would be much better for you to charge one of the men to fire the train."

"My dear Groslow," said Mordaunt, "you know the French proverb—'*One is never well served, except by oneself.*' I will act upon this."

Grimaud had heard, if he had not understood, everything; but the scene he witnessed supplied any defect there might be in his comprehension of the conversation. He had seen and recognised the two deadly enemies of the musketeers—he had seen Mordaunt arrange the match—he had heard the proverb, which, for greater facility, Mordaunt had repeated in French—in fine, he had felt and refelt the contents of the pitcher he held in his hand; and, instead of the liquid that Mousqueton and Blaisois expected, the grains of a thick powder crackled and crumbled under his fingers.

Mordaunt and the captain departed. At the door they stopped and listened.

"Do you hear how they sleep?" said Mordaunt.

In reality, Porthos was heard snoring through the boarding.

"It is God who delivers them into your hands!" said Groslow.

"And, this time, the devil himself could not save them!" said Mordaunt.

And they both left the place.

Grimaud waited till he heard the lock of the door creak in its receptacle; and when he was quite sure that he was alone, he glided gently along the partition.

"Ah!" said he, wiping the large drops of perspiration from his forehead, "how fortunate it was that Blaisois was thirsty."

He made haste to pass through his opening, thinking still that he was dreaming; but the sight of the powder in the jug, proved to him that this dream was a deadly night-mare.

D'Artagnan, as may be imagined, heard all these details with increasing interest; and without waiting till Grimaud had finished, he arose without any noise, and applying his mouth to Aramis's ear, who slept on his left, and touching his shoulder at the same time,

to prevent any hasty movement—"Chevalier," said he, "get up without the slightest noise."

Aramis awoke. D'Artagnan repeated the injunction, at the same time pressing his hand. Aramis obeyed.

"You have Athos at your left," said he: "warn him, as I have cautioned you."

Aramis easily awoke Athos, whose sleep was light, as is generally the case in delicate and nervous temperaments; but there was more difficulty in rousing Porthos. He was going to ask for the causes and reasons of this interruption of his sleep, which appeared to him to be very unpleasant, when d'Artagnan, in lieu of all explanation, laid his hand upon his mouth.

Then our Gascon, thrusting out his arm, and drawing them all towards him, enclosed in his circle the three heads, in such a manner that they touched each other.

"Friends," said he, "we must instantaneously leave this vessel, or we are all dead men."

"Bah!" said Athos: "what now?"

"Do you know who is the captain of this vessel?"

"No."

"Captain Groslow!"

A shudder of the three musketeers informed d'Artagnan that his speech began to make some impression on his friends.

"Groslow!" said Aramis: "the fiend!"

"Who is this Groslow?" demanded Porthos. "I cannot remember him."

"He who broke Parry's head, and who is at this moment preparing to break ours."

"Oh! oh!"

"And his lieutenant—do you know who he is?"

"His lieutenant? He has none," said Athos. "There is no lieutenant in a felucca, carrying four men."

"Aye, but M. Groslow is not an ordinary captain. He has a lieutenant, and that lieutenant is M. Mordaunt."

This time it was more than a shudder amongst the musketeers—it was almost a shout. These invincible men were subjected to a

mysterious and fatal influence, which this name exercised over them, and felt a kind of dread whenever it was only pronounced in their presence.

"What can we do?" said Athos.

"Take possession of the felucca," said Aramis.

"And kill him," said Porthos.

"The felucca is mined," said d'Artagnan. "Those barrels, that I took for casks full of Oporto wine, are barrels of gunpowder. When Mordaunt finds himself detected, he will blow up every thing—friends and foes—and, faith! he is a gentleman of too bad a character for me to wish to make my appearance, either in heaven or hell, in his society.

"You have therefore, got a plan?" demanded Athos,

"Yes."

"What is it?"

"Have you confidence in me?"

"Command," said each of the musketeers, at the same moment.

"Well, then, come!" And d'Artagnan went to a window, so low as to be like a scuttle-hole, but which was large enough for the passage of a man. He made it turn gently on its hinges.

"That is the way," said he.

"The fiend!" said Aramis: "it is monstrous cold, my dear friend."

"Remain if you like; but I forewarn you, that you will soon be hot enough."

"But we cannot reach land by swimming."

"The boat is following in our wake; we will reach it, and cut the rope: that's all. Come along, gentlemen."

"One moment," said Athos: "our lacqueys?"

"Here we are," said Mousqueton and Blaisois, whom Grimaud had brought, so as to concentrate all their forces in the cabin, and who had entered by the hatchway, that closely adjoined the cabin, without being seen.

Yet the three friends remained motionless before the terrible spectacle that d'Artagnan had disclosed to them by lifting up the shutter, and which they could see through this narrow opening. In

fact, whoever has once seen it, well knows that nothing is more profoundly impressive, than a swelling sea, rolling its dark billows along, with their hoarse murmurs, by the pale light of a winter's moon.

"We hesitate, it seems," said d'Artagnan. "If we waver, what will our lacqueys do?"

"I do not hesitate," said Grimaud.

"Sir," said Blaisois, "I only know how to swim in rivers."

"And as for me, I do not know how to swim at all," said Mousqueton.

In the meantime, d'Artagnan had slipped through the opening.

"You are therefore determined?" said Athos.

"Yes," replied Gascon. "Come, Athos, you, who are the perfection of a man, command the intellect to govern the matter. You, Aramis, give directions to the lacqueys; and you, Porthos, slay every thing that opposes us."

And d'Artagnan, after having pressed Athos's hand, choosing the moment when the felucca pitched backward, had only to let himself slip into the water, which already reached up to his waist.

Athos followed him, even before the vessel had pitched forward; and as she rose, the rope that fastened the boat to her stern was seen to issue from the deep.

D'Artagnan swam towards this rope, which he reached, and held on to it by one hand, with his head just above the surface of the water. An instant afterwards, he was joined by Athos

Two more heads were now seen: they were those of Aramis and Grimaud.

"Blaisois rather disturbs me," said Athos. "Did you not hear him say, d'Artagnan, that he only knew how to swim in rivers."

"When one can swim at all, he can swim anywhere," said d'Artagnan. "To the boat! to the boat!"

"But Porthos? I cannot see him."

"Porthos is coming: do not trouble yourself about him: he swims like Leviathan himself."

In fact, Porthos had not yet made his appearance, in consequence of a scene, half ludicrous, half dramatic, that was enacting between

him, Blaisois, and Mousqueton. These last, frightened by the noise of the waves and the whistling of the wind, terrified by that dark abyss of waters boiling up from the deep, drew back, instead of advancing.

"Come, come!" said Porthos, "into the water with you!"

"But," said Mousqueton, "I cannot swim: leave me here."

"And me also," said Blaisois.

"I assure you that I should only cumber you in that little boat," continued Mousqueton.

"And I am sure that I should be drowned before I reached it," added Blaisois.

"Well, then, I will strangle you both, if you do not get out!" said Porthos, seizing them by the throat. "Out with you, Blaisois!"

A groan, stifled by the iron hand of Porthos, was the sole response of Blaisois; for the giant, holding him by the neck and heels, made him glide like a plank through the window, and sent him head foremost into the sea.

"Now, Mouston," said Porthos, "I hope that you do not mean to abandon your master?"

"Ah, sir!" replied Mousqueton, with tears in his eyes, "why did you resume service? We were so happy at the chateau de Pierrefonds!" And without any other reproach, he became passive and obedient; and, whether from real devotion, or from the example given in the case of Blaisois, Mousqueton pitched head foremost into the sea—a sublime action in either case, for Mousqueton thought himself a dead man.

But Porthos was not the individual thus to abandon his faithful companion. The master followed the valet so close, that the plunge of each body made but one and the same sound; and when Mousqueton returned to the surface, quite blinded, he found himself supported by Porthos's large hand, and could gently glide towards the boat with the majesty of a marine god, and without any movement whatever.

At the same moment Porthos saw something bubbling up within reach of his hand, and seizing this something by the hair, he found it was Blaisois, to whose aid Athos was then coming.

"Return, count; I do not require you," said Porthos. And by one or two vigorous strokes he erected himself like the giant Adamastor above the waves, and rejoined his companions.

D'Artagnan, Aramis, and Grimaud assisted Mousqueton and Blaisois into the boat. Then came Porthos, who, in climbing over the side, nearly upset the little vessel.

"And Athos?" inquired d'Artagnan.

"Here I am," replied Athos, who, like a general covering the retreat, wished to be the last to enter the boat, and held on by its edge. "Are you all safe?"

"All," said d'Artagnan. Have you got your poignard, Athos?"

"Yes."

"Then cut the rope, and come in."

Athos drew his poignard from his girdle, and cut the rope: the felucca left them astern, and the boat remained stationary, without any other motion that that given to it by the waves.

"Come in, Athos," said d'Artagnan. And he gave his hand to the Count de la Fère, who also took his place in the boat.

"It is quite time," said the Gascon, "and you will soon see something curious.'

CHAPTER XXXI.

FATALITY.

Scarcely had d'Artagnan finished these words, before a whistle was heard on board the felucca, which began to be lost in the mist and darkness,

"That, as you can well understand," said the Gascon, "means something."

At the same moment a lantern was seen on the deck, delineating some shadows behind it. Then suddenly a cry of despair was heard across the deep; and, as if this cry had chased away the

clouds, the veil that hid the moon was rent asunder, and the gray sails and dark rigging of the felucca were seen, traced upon the sky, silvered by its pale light. These dark shadows ran about the deck in utter dismay, and piteous cries, accompanied their insensate course. In the midst of these cries Mordaunt was seen on the top of the poop, with a torch in his hand.

At the time appointed Groslow had collected his men; whilst Mordaunt, having listened at the door of the cabin, and satisfied himself, by their silence, that the musketeers still slept, had descended to the hold. In fact, who could possibly suspect what had just occurred? Mordaunt had consequently opened the door, and eagerly thirsting for revenge, and confident that he should now obtain it, he had set fire to the match. In the meantime, Groslow and his men had assembled at the stern.

"Haul in the rope," said Groslow, "and pull the boat alongside."

One of the men climbed into the chains, and seized the rope, which he drew towards him, without any resistance whatever.

"The rope is cut, and the boat is gone," said the sailor.

"What! the boat gone?" cried Groslow, rushing towards the chains: "it is impossible!"

"It is so, however," said the sailor; "look yourself: there is nothing in our wake; and besides, here is the end of the rope."

It was then that Groslow uttered that cry which the musketeers had heard.

"What is the matter?" exclaimed Mordaunt, who emerging from the hatchway, also rushed towards the stern, with his torch in his hand.

"It is, that our enemies are escaping us: they have cut the rope, and are flying in the boat."

Mordaunt made but one bound to the cabin, which he burst open with a kick. "Empty! he cried: "oh, the demons!"

"We must pursue them," said Groslow; "they cannot be far off, and we will run them down and sink them"

"Yes—but the train!" replied Mordaunt—"I have set fire to it!"

"To what?"

"To the match."

"A thousand thunders!" shouted Groslow, rushing towards the hatchway. "Perhaps there is yet time."

Mordaunt—his features convulsed by hatred even more than by terror, and looking up towards heaven with his haggard eyes, as if to launch forth one last blasphemy—only responded by a fearful laugh. Then casting his torch before him, he precipitated himself headlong into the sea.

At the same moment, and just as Groslow had set his foot on the first step of the hatchway, the vessel yawned open like the crater of a volcano, and a stream of fire rushed upwards towards the heavens, with an explosion equal to that of a hundred pieces of cannon thundering forth at the same time. The air appeared to be on fire, furrowed as it was by the broken masses of burning wreck. Then this awful light disappeared, the shattered pieces of wreck fell one after the other into the mighty waters, hissing in the abyss, where they were extinguished; and, in the next moment, with the exception of the vibration of the air, it might have been supposed that nothing had happened.

The felucca had disappeared from the surface of the deep, and Groslow and his three men had been annihilated.

The four friends had witnessed all this: not one of the details of this fearful drama had escaped their notice. At one moment, when revealed by the dazzling light that had illumined the sea for a league around, they might have been seen, each in a different attitude, and expressive of that terror which, in spite of their hearts of bronze, they could not wholly repress. Then the fiery deluge fell all around them; the volcano was extinguished; and, as we have said, everything returned to its former obscurity—the floating boat, and the roaring ocean.

They remained for a moment silent, and with minds utterly prostrated. Porthos and d'Artagnan, who had each taken an oar, held them suspended motionless above the water, leaning their whole weight upon them, and grasping them with convulsed hands.

"Faith," said Aramis, who was the first to break this deathlike silence, "this time, I imagine, all is finished."

"Here, my lord! help! help!" cried a voice filled with woe, whose accents came across the waters like those of some spirit of the deep.

All looked at each other. Even Athos was startled. "It is he—it is his voice!" said he.

All of them remained silent; for all had, like Athos, recognised his voice. But their eyes, with dilated pupils, turned in the direction where the vessel had disappeared, making incredible efforts to pierce through the darkness. In a few moments, they could distinguish a man, who approached them, swimming strongly. Athos slowly stretched forth his arm, pointing him out to his companions.

"Yes, yes," said d'Artagnan, "I can see him well enough."

"What? He here again!" said Porthos, with a respiration like that emitted by a blacksmith's forge. "Well, he certainly is made of iron!"

"Oh, my God!" murmured Athos.

Aramis and d'Artagnan whispered to each other.

Mordaunt made a few more strokes, and then, raising one hand above the water, as a signal of distress—"Pity, gentlemen! pity, in the name of heaven! My strength is failing me, and I shall die!"

There was so much tremulation in the voice that thus implored assistance, that it excited compassion in Athos's heart. "Unhappy wretch!" said he.

"Truly," said d'Artagnan, "nothing more was wanted, than that you should pity him. I verily believe that he is swimming towards us. Does he fancy, then, that we shall take him in? Row, Porthos, row." And setting the example, d'Artagnan plunged his oar into the sea, and with two strokes sent the boat twenty fathoms from him.

"Oh! you will not abandon me! you will not leave me to perish! you will not be wholly devoid of pity!" cried Mordaunt.

"Aha!" said Porthos, "I fancy that we have got you at last, my fine fellow, and that you have now no other port of refuge than hell."

"Oh, Porthos!" murmured the Count de la Fère.

"Let me alone, Athos. Verily, you become perfectly ridiculous,

with your everlasting generosities! I positively declare, that if he comes within ten feet of the boat, I will split his head with the oar."

"Oh! for mercy's sake, do not leave me, gentlemen! for mercy! —have pity on me!" cried the young man, his panting respiration sometimes making the water bubble up when his head almost disappeared under the billows.

D'Artagnan had never taken his eye from Mordaunt, and having now finished his conference with Aramis, he rose up. "Sir," said he, addressing the swimmer, "be off with you, I beseech you. Your repentance is too recent for us to have much confidence in it. Remember, that the vessel in which you wished to grill us all, is still smoking at some feet from the surface of the water, and that the situation in which you are at present is a bed of roses compared with that in which you wished to place us, and in which you have placed M. Groslow and his companions."

"Gentlemen," said Mordaunt, in accents of utter despair, "I swear to you that my repentance is sincere. Gentlemen, I am so young—I am scarcely twenty-three years old! Gentlemen, I have been dragged along by a natural resentment: I wished to avenge my mother; and you yourselves would all have done as I have."

"Pooh!" said d'Artagnan, seeing that Athos was becoming more and more affected; "that is according to circumstances."

Mordaunt had not more than three or four strokes to make to reach the boat, for the approach of death seemed to give him supernatural strength.

"Alas!" he replied, "I must die then. You will kill the son, as you killed the mother! And yet I was not culpable. According to all rules, human and divine, a son ought to avenge his mother. And besides," added he, clasping his hands, "if it be a crime—as I repent, and as I demand pardon for it, I ought to be forgiven."

And, as if his strength failed him, he appeared to be no longer able to keep himself above water, and a wave passed over his head, stifling his voice.

"Oh! this lacerates my heart!" said Athos.

Mordaunt reappeared.

"And as for me," said d'Artagnan, "I say that it is necessary to put an end to all this. You, sir—the assassin of your uncle—the executioner of King Charles—the incendiary—I engage to let you sink to the bottom, or, if you come within a fathom of the boat, to split your head with the oar."

Mordaunt, as if in the agonies of despair, made a stroke. D'Artagnan grasped his oar with both his hands. Athos rose up.

"D'Artagnan! d'Artagnan!" he exclaimed, "d'Artagnan, my son! I beseech you! The unhappy wretch is dying; and it is quite frightful to let a man die without stretching out a hand to him, when it is only necessary to do so to save him. My heart recoils from such an action. I cannot resist its impulses: he must live!"

"Zounds!" replied d'Artagnan, "why not at once give yourself up, bound hand and feet, to this wretch? That would be sooner done. Ah! Count de la Fère, you wish to perish through him. Well, then, I—your son, as you call me—I do not wish it."

This was the first time that d'Artagnan had ever resisted an appeal which Athos had made to him as his son.

Aramis coolly drew his sword, which he had brought between his teeth as he swam. "If he lays a finger on the edge of the boat, I will cut his hand off, regicide as he is," said he.

"And I," said Porthos—"wait now."

"What will you do?" demanded Aramis.

"I will throw myself into the water and strangle him."

"Oh, gentlemen!" exclaimed Athos, with irresistible pathos, "let us be men—let us be Christians!"

D'Artagnan emitted a sigh much resembling a groan, Aramis lowered his sword, and Porthos sat down again.

"Look at him," said Athos, "look! Death is painted on his countenance, his powers are exhausted · one minute more, and he sinks to the bottom of the abyss. Ah! do not entail upon me this horrible remorse—do not force me to die of shame, my friends! Grant me the life of this unhappy man, and I will bless you—I will—"

'I am dying!" murmured Mordaunt: "help! help!"

"Let us gain one minute," said Aramis, leaning down to d'Ar-

tagnan's ear: "one stroke of the oar," he added, whispering to Porthos.

D'Artagnan made no answer, either by word or gesture: he began to feel himself moved, partly by Athos's entreaties, partly by the spectacle passing before his eyes. Porthos alone gave a stroke with his oar; and as this stroke had no counterpoise, the boat only turned half round, and this motion brought Athos nearer the dying man.

"M. le Count de la Fère!" exclaimed Mordaunt—"M. le Count de la Fère! It is you whom I address—it is you whom I supplicate! Have pity on me! Where are you, Count de la Fère? I can no longer see—I am dying—help! help!"

"Here I am," said Athos, leaning down, and stretching out his arm towards Mordaunt, with all that dignified generosity, so habitual to him: "here I am. Take my hand, and get into our boat."

"I much prefer not looking," said d'Artagnan: "this weakness is repugnant to my feelings." And he turned towards his two friends, who, on their parts, went towards the other end of the boat, as if they feared even to touch him to whom Athos did not fear to hold out his hand.

Mordaunt made one final effort, raised himself, seized the hand that was held out to him, and clutched it with the violence of a last hope.

"Very well!" said Athos, "put your other hand here." And he offered him his shoulder as a second support, so that his head almost touched that of Mordaunt, and these two deadly enemies seemed to embrace each other like two brothers. Mordaunt grasped Athos's collar with his convulsed fingers.

"Very well, sir," said the count: "now you are saved; calm your feelings."

"Ah, my mother!" exclaimed Mordaunt, with a look of fire, and an accent of indescribable hatred—"I can only offer you one victim; but it shall at least be that which you would have chosen yourself."

And whilst d'Artagnan was uttering a cry, Porthos raising his

oar, and Aramis seeking for an opportunity of striking Mordaunt, a fearful jerk was given to the boat, and Athos was drawn into the water; whilst Mordaunt, with a triumphant cry, clasped the neck of his victim, and, to paralyze his efforts, encircled his legs with his own; just as a serpent might have enfolded its prey.

For a moment, without uttering a cry, without calling for help, Athos endeavoured to keep himself on the surface of the water; but the weight drawing him down, he gradually disappeared, and nothing was to be seen but his long hair floating on the waters. Then everything disappeared, and a large bubbling whirlpool (which itself was soon lost) alone indicated the spot where the two had been engulphed.

Mute with horror, motionless, choked by indignation and terror, the three friends remained with mouths open, eyes dilated, and arms extended: they resembled statues, and yet their hearts could actually be heard beating. Porthos first recovered himself and tearing his hair—

"Oh!" he exclaimed, with a sob that must have been excruciating —"oh, Athos! Athos! noble heart! Misery! misery! that we should have thus allowed him to die!"

"Oh, yes," repeated d'Artagnan—"misery!"

"Misery!" murmured Aramis.

At this very moment, in the midst of the vast circle illumined by the rays of the moon, and about three or four fathoms from the boat, the same bubbling that had announced their absorption was renewed, and they saw appear, first the hair, then a pale face, with its eyes wide open, but yet dead, then a body, which, after having erected itself, even to its bust, above the sea, gently turned upon its back, yielding itself to the caprice of the billows. A poignard, whose golden handle glittered in the moonlight, was buried up to the hilt in the breast of this dead body.

"Mordaunt! Mordaunt!" exclaimed the three friends; "it is Mordaunt!

"But Athos?" said d'Artagnan.

Suddenly the boat swerved to one side, under the influence of an unexpected weight, and Grimaud sent forth a shout of joy. Al

turned round, and Athos, pale as a corpse, with eyes that had lost all speculation, and trembling hand, was perceived, leaning on the edge of the boat. Eight nervous arms quickly lifted him up, and in an instant he found himself warmed, re-animated, and recovering, under the caresses and embraces of his friends, who were intoxicated with joy.

"But are you not wounded?" demanded d'Artagnan.

"No," replied Athos. "And he?"

"Oh, he! This time, thank God! he is dead enough. Behold!" And d'Artagnan, forcing Athos to look in the direction indicated, pointed out to him the body of Mordaunt floating on the waves, and which, sometimes submerged, sometimes elevated, appeared as if it still pursued the four friends with a look replete with insult and mortal hatred. At last it sunk. Athos had followed it with an eye, still expressive of sorrow and pity.

"Bravo, Athos!" said Aramis, with an expansion of the heart very rare with him.

"What a splendid blow!" exclaimed Porthos.

"I have a son," said Athos, "and I wished to live."

"After all, see how God has spoken," said d'Artagnan.

"It is not I who killed him," murmured Athos—"it is fate!"

CHAPTER XXXII.

WHEREIN, AFTER HAVING NARROWLY ESCAPED BEING ROASTED, MOUSQUETON WAS VERY NEAR BEING EATEN.

A profound silence reigned in the boat for some time after the terrible scene we have just recounted. The moon, which had shown itself for a short time, as if God had wished that no one single particular of this event should be concealed from the eyes of the spectators, disappeared behind the clouds; and everything returned to that obscurity, so fearful in all deserts, and more particularly on

that liquid desert, the ocean. Nothing was now heard except the whistling of the wind over the crests of the waves.

Porthos was the first to break silence. "I have seen many things," said he, "but nothing ever affected me so much as that which I have just seen. And yet, agitated as I am, I positively declare that I feel myself excessively happy. I have a hundred pounds weight, at least, removed from my heart, and at length I breathe freely." And Porthos respired with a sound that did honour to the vigorous play of his lungs.

"As for me," said Aramis, "I will not say so much as you, Porthos; for I am yet frightened; so much so, that I cannot believe my own eyes. I doubt what I have seen; I keep looking around the boat, and I expect every moment to see that wretch reappear, holding in his hand the poignard he had in his heart."

"As for me, I am quite easy about that," replied Porthos. "The blow was struck about the sixth rib, and buried even to the hilt. I do not reproach you for it, Athos: on the contrary, when one strikes, it is best to strike in that manner. Therefore, now I live, I breathe, I am joyful."

"Do not be in haste to celebrate your victory, Porthos," said d'Artagnan. Never have we been in greater danger than at present; for man conquers man, but not an element. We are now at sea, at night, without a guide, and in a frail barque. Should one blast of wind upset our boat, we are all lost."

Mousqueton heaved a profound sigh.

"You are ungrateful, d'Artagnan," said Athos; "yes, ungrateful, to doubt Providence at the very moment when she has just saved us in a manner so miraculous. Do you believe that her protecting hand has guided us through so many dangers, only to abandon us at last? No. In short, we sailed with the wind from the west, and we have still the same wind."

Athos then examined their position by the polar star. "There is Charles's Wain; consequently, there is France. Let us go with the wind, which, so long as it does not change, will urge us towards the shores of Calais or Boulogne. Should the boat upset, we are sufficiently strong, and good swimmers enough, five of us at least,

to right her, or to hold on by her, should this effort be beyond our strength. We are now in the direct course of all the vessels that go from Dover to Calais, or from Portsmouth to Boulogne; and if the water could preserve their track, their wake would have marked a furrow in the very spot where we now are. At daybreak, therefore, we are certain to meet with some fishing-boat which will pick us up."

"But should we not meet with one, and should the wind turn to the north?"

"Then," said Athos, "it would be quite another thing: we should not meet with land until we arrived on the other side of the Atlantic."

"Which means to say, that we should die of hunger," replied Aramis.

"It is more than probable," said the Count de la Fère.

Mousqueton heaved a second sigh, more lamentable than the first.

"Ah, Mouston, what is the matter with you, that you are always groaning in that manner?" demanded Porthos. "It becomes very tiresome."

"I am very cold, sir," replied Mousqueton.

"That is impossible," said Porthos.

"Impossible?" said the astonished Mousqueton.

"Certainly. You have a body covered with a bed of fat that renders it impenetrable to the air. There is something else: speak candidly."

"Well then, sir, it is this same bed of fat, on which you congratulate me, that terrifies me."

"And why so, Mouston? Speak boldly: these gentlemen permit you."

"Because, sir, I remember, that, in the library of the chateau de Bracieux, there are many books of voyages, and amongst them those of Jean Moquet, the famous traveller, in the time of Henry IV."

"And what then?"

"Well, sir," continued Mousqueton, "in those books, many

maritime adventures and events, like that which now threatens us, are spoken of."

"Proceed, Mousqueton," said Porthos. "This analogy is full of interest."

"Well, sir, Jean Moquet says, that, under similar circumstances, famished voyagers have the frightful habit of eating one another, and of beginning with——"

"With the fattest," cried d'Artagnan, unable to restrain his laughter, notwithstanding the gravity of their situation.

"Yes, sir," replied Mousqueton, somewhat abashed by this hilarity; "and permit me to observe, that I do not see what there can possibly be to laugh at in all this."

"This brave Mouston is devotion personified," resumed Porthos. "I would wager, that you already saw yourself, in imagination, cut up and eaten by your master."

"Yes, sir; although the joy which you suppose I experience is not, I confess, without some mixture of sadness. Yet, sir, I should not so much regret the sacrifice, if I was certain that, by dying, I should still be useful to you."

"Mouston," said Porthos, quite affected, "if we ever should see the chateau de Pierrefonds again, you shall have, as your own property, for yourself and your descendants, the vineyard that is just above the farm."

'And you will name it the Vineyard of Devotion, Mouston," said Aramis, "to hand down to succeeding ages the memorial of your sacrifice."

"Chevalier," said d'Artagnan, laughing in turn, "you would eat Mouston without much repugnance, would you not, especially after two or three days' dieting?"

"Oh, faith, no," replied Aramis: "I would have preferred Blaisois, whom we have not known so long."

With the exception of Grimaud, who considered himself free from any danger on this score, it may be supposed that the valets were not very comfortable during the exchange of these pleasantries, the chief object of which was to divert Athos's thoughts from the scene that had just passed.

Therefore Grimaud, without taking any part in the conversation, and mute, according to his custom, kept rowing as hard as he could, with an oar in each hand.

"You row then, Grimaud?" said Athos.

Grimaud nodded.

"And why do you row?"

"To keep myself warm."

In fact, whilst the other shipwrecked men were shivering with cold, the silent Grimaud was in a dripping perspiration.

Suddenly Mousqueton sent forth a shout of joy, and elevated his hand above his head, armed with a bottle. "Oh!" said he, presenting the bottle to Porthos—"oh, sir, we are saved! The boat is victualled."

And feeling eagerly under the bench, from whence he had drawn the precious sample, he brought forth successively a dozen bottles of the same kind, some bread, and a piece of salt beef. It is needless to say, that this discovery restored gaiety to all, except Athos.

"Faith!" said Porthos, who, it may be remembered, was hungry even when he first set his foot on board the felucca, "it is quite astonishing how agitation racks the stomach." And he emptied a bottle at a draught, and ate, for his own share, a good third part of the bread and beef.

"Now," said Athos, "sleep, or endeavour to sleep, gentlemen. I will keep watch."

To any other men but our hardy adventurers, such a proposition would have seemed derisive. They were, in fact, wet to their very bones, there was a freezing wind, and the agitation they had lately experienced might have sufficed to drive sleep from their eyelids. But as for these choice spirits, with their iron constitutions, and their frames inured to every species of fatigue, sleep invariably obeyed their call, under all circumstances.

Therefore, in a few minutes, each of them, full of confidence in their pilot, had laid himself down according to his fancy, and had endeavoured to take advantage of the advice given by Athos; who, seated at the rudder, with his eyes fixed on the heavens, (where,

no doubt, he sought, not only the route to France, but the face of God,) remained alone, as he had promised, pensive and watchful, and directing the little barque in the way it ought to go.

After some hours' sleep, the voyagers were awakened by Athos. The first light of day had just begun to whiten the blue sea, and, at the distance of about ten gun-shots ahead, a dark mass was visible, above which a triangular sail was spread, narrow and long, like a swallow's wing.

"A vessel!" exclaimed the three friends with one voice; whilst the lacqueys, on their part, expressed their joy in different tones. It was, in fact a Dunkirk flute, sailing to Boulogne.

The four masters, with Blaisois and Mousqueton, united their voices in one single cry, that vibrated over the elastic surface of the waters; whilst Grimaud, without saying anything, put his hat on the top of an oar, to attract the observation of those whom they were hailing. In a quarter of an hour, they were taken in tow by the boat of this vessel, on the deck of which they soon found themselves. Grimaud, in his master's name, offered twenty guineas to the captain; and, the wind being favourable, at nine in the morning our Frenchmen set their feet on the land of their birth.

"Zounds! how strong one feels here," said Porthos, burying his large feet in the sand. "Let any one pick a quarrel with me now—let him even frown at, or tickle me—and he shall soon see who he has to deal with! Faith, I would set a whole kingdom at defiance!"

"And I," said d'Artagnan, "would advise you not to sound forth your defiance too loudly, Porthos; for it appears to me that they look very hard at us here."

"By Jove!" said Porthos—"they are admiring us."

"Well, for my part," replied d'Artagnan, "my vanity cannot thus account for it, Porthos. I perceive some men in black robes; and, in our situation, I confess that these men in black alarm me."

"They are the registrars of the merchandise of the port," said Aramis.

"Under the other cardinal—I mean the great one," said Athos,

"they would have paid more attention to us than to merchandise; but under this man—so do not disturb yourselves, my friends—they will pay more attention to merchandise than to us."

"I am not so confident of that," said d'Artagnan, "and I shall take to the downs."

"But why not the town?" said Porthos: "I would much prefer a good inn to these frightful deserts of sand, which God created merely for the rabbits. Besides, I am very hungry."

"Do as you like, Porthos," said d'Artagnan; "as for me, I am convinced that the safest plan, for men in our situation, is to gain the open country." And d'Artagnan, quite certain of carrying the majority with him, hid himself in the downs, without waiting for Porthos's answer.

The little troop followed him, and soon disappeared behind the hills of sand, but not without having attracted the attention of the people.

"Now," said Aramis, when they had gone about a quarter of a league, "let us have some talk."

"No," said d'Artagnan, "let us fly. We have escaped from Cromwell, from Mordaunt, and from the sea, those gulfs that wished to swallow us up; but we shall not escape my Lord Mazarin."

"You are right, d'Artagnan," said Aramis; "and my advice is, that, for greater security, we should separate."

"Yes, Aramis," replied d'Artagnan, "let us separate."

Porthos wished to combat this resolution; but d'Artagnan made him understand, by pressing his hand, that he ought to hold his tongue. Porthos was very obedient to these intimations of his companion, whose intellectual superiority he acknowledged with his usual good-nature. He therefore swallowed the words that were ready to issue from his mouth.

"But why should we separate!" said Athos.

"Because," replied d'Artagnan, "we, that is, Porthos and myself, were sent to Cromwell by Mazarin; and, instead of serving Cromwell, we served Charles I., which is not exactly the same thing. By returning with the Count de la Fère, and the Chevalier d'Herblay, our crime is avowed; by returning alone, our crime remains

doubtful; and, amid doubt, men go a long way. Now, I wish to make M. Mazarin see a little of the country."

"That is all true," said Porthos.

"You forget," said Athos, "that we are your prisoners—that we do not consider ourselves at all absolved from our parole to you—and that, by taking us as prisoners to Paris—"

"Now really, Athos," broke in d'Artagnan, "I am concerned that a man of talent, like yourself, should be always uttering such puerilities as would make the scholars of the third class blush. Chevalier," continued d'Artagnan, addressing Aramis, who, leaning fiercely on his sword, appeared to have coincided with his friend at the first word, although he had at first given an opinion diametrically opposite—"Chevalier, understand that in this case, as in all others, my suspicious character somewhat exaggerates. I and Porthos run no danger, or next to none. But if, by chance, they were to attempt to arrest us in your presence—well, they could not arrest seven men, as they arrest three: the swords would see daylight, and the affair, bad enough for all, would become a heinous crime, that would destroy us all four. Besides, should any misfortune happen to two of our number, would it not be better that the other two should be at liberty to extricate them—to creep about, to mine and sap—in fine, to deliver them? And then, who knows whether we may not obtain separately—you from the queen, we from Mazarin—the pardon that would be refused to us united? Come, Athos and Aramis, do you take to the right; whilst you, Porthos, will come to the left with me. Let these gentlemen file off through Normandy, and let us gain Paris by the shortest route."

"But, should we be arrested on the road, how shall we mutually inform each other of this catastrophe?" demanded Aramis.

"Nothing more easy," replied d'Artagnan: "let us agree upon a route from which we must not deviate. Go you to St. Valery, then to Dieppe, and then follow the direct road to Paris. We will proceed by Abbeville, Amiens, Péronne, Compiègne, and Senlis; and in each tavern, in every house where we stop, we will write on the wall with the point of a knife, or on the window with a diamond, a token that may guide the researches of those who are free."

"Ah, my friend," said Athos, "how I should admire the resources of your head, if I were not compelled to pay homage to those of your heart!" And he extended his hand to d'Artagnan.

"And has the fox some talent, Athos?" said the Gascon, with a shrug. "No; it knows how to gobble up chickens, to baulk the hunters, and to find its way by night as well as by day—that is all. Well, is it settled?"

"Yes it is."

"Then let us divide the money," said d'Artagnan: "there ought to be about two hundred pistoles remaining. How much is there left, Grimaud?"

"One hundred and eighty half-louis, sir."

"That is it. Ah, bravo! there is the sun. Good morning to you my friend sun. Although you are not the same here as in Gascony, I know you again, or, rather, I pretend to do so. Good morning to you. It is a long time since I have seen you."

"Come, come, d'Artagnan," said Athos, "do not set yourself up as above all feeling: you have got tears in your eyes. Let us always be open and candid with each other: that frankness ought always to be prominently displayed amongst the rest of our good qualities."

"Well, then," replied d'Artagnan, "do you think, Athos, that one can coldly part with two such friends as you and Aramis, and at a time when there may be some danger?"

"No," said Athos; "therefore, come to my arms, my son!"

"Zounds!" said Porthos sobbing, "I verily believe that I am crying. How silly it is!"

And the four friends mutually embraced. These men, united by the bonds of fraternity, had now but one soul.

Blaisois and Grimaud were to follow Athos and Aramis. Mousqueton sufficed for d'Artagnan and Porthos.

The money was, as usual, divided with fraternal exactness. Then, after having pressed each other's hands, and mutually given reiterated assurances of eternal friendship, the four gentlemen separated, each party to take the road agreed upon, but not without turning round, and again sending back some words of affection

which were repeated by the echoes of the downs. At length they were lost to each other's sight.

"*Sacrebleu!* d'Artagnan," said Porthos, "I must needs tell you immediately—for I can never lock up in my heart anything against you—I have not recognised you in this affair."

"And why so?" demanded d'Artagnan, with his acute smile.

"Because, if, as you say, Athos and Aramis incur a real danger, it is not the moment to abandon them. For my part, I confess that I was much inclined to follow them; and have half a mind, even now, to rejoin them, in spite of all the Mazarins in the world."

"You would be quite right, Porthos, if it were indeed so," replied d'Artagnan; "but learn one little trifling circumstance, which, small as it is, will probably change the course of your ideas. It is not those gentlemen who run the greatest danger, but ourselves; and it is not to abandon them that we quit them, but that we may not compromise them."

"Really!" said Porthos, opening his eyes wide with astonishment.

"Yes, there is no doubt of it. Should they be arrested, they would simply be taken to the Bastile; whilst, should that happen to us, it would be extremely doubtful whether it might not be a matter for the Place de Grève."

"Oho!" said Porthos, "it is a long way from thence to the baron's coronet you promised me, d'Artagnan."

"Bah! not so far as you imagine, perhaps, Porthos. You know the proverb—every road leads to Rome."

"But why do we incur greater danger than Athos and Aramis?" demanded Porthos.

"Because they did no more than follow the orders they received from Queen Henrietta, whilst we have disobeyed those we received from Mazarin—because, having set out as messengers to Cromwell, we became partisans of King Charles—because, instead of assisting in cutting off the royal head, condemned by those scoundrels, Mazarin, Cromwell, Joyce, Pridge, Fairfax, and the rest, we were very near rescuing him."

"Faith, that is true," said Porthos. "But can you imagine, my

dear friend, that, in the midst of his lofty occupations, General Cromwell would have time to think?—"

"Cromwell thinks of everything—Cromwell has time for everything; and believe me, my dear friend, that we must not lose ours, for it is very precious. We shall not be safe until we have seen Mazarin; and, more than that—

"The fiend!" exclaimed Porthos, "and what shall we say to Mazarin?"

'Let me alone for that: I have got my plan: he will laugh best who laughs the last. Cromwell is very powerful, and Mazarin is very cunning; but yet I prefer struggling against them, rather than against the late M. Mordaunt."

"There, now! how agreeable it is to say—*the late M. Mordaunt*," said Porthos.

"Faith, and so it is!" replied d'Artagnan. "But forward!'

And both of them, without losing a moment, went across the country at a venture, in the direction of Paris, followed by Mousqueton, who, after having been too cold all night, was, in a quarter of an hour, a great deal too warm.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE RETURN.

Athos and Aramis had followed the route assigned to them by d'Artagnan, and had travelled as rapidly as possible. They thought that it would be more advantageous to them to be arrested near Paris, than at a distance from it. Every evening, in the event of their being arrested during the night, they traced, either on the wall or on the windows, the signal agreed upon; but to their great surprise, every morning, on awaking, they found themselves at liberty.

As they drew near Paris, the great events in which they had

assisted, and which had convulsed England, vanished like dreams; whilst, on the other hand, those which had agitated Paris and the country, during their absence, were brought before their notice.

During this interval of six weeks, so many little circumstances had taken place in France, that they almost constituted a great event. The Parisians, on waking in the morning without their king and queen, were much disturbed by this abandonment; and the absence of Mazarin, so anxiously desired, did not compensate for that of the august fugitives. The first feeling, therefore, that agitated Paris, when it learnt the flight to St. Germain—a flight in which we caused our readers to assist—was that kind of terror that seizes children when they awake in the night, or in solitude. The parliament was much excited, and it was decided that a deputation should be sent to the queen, to entreat her no longer to deprive Paris of her presence.

But the queen was as yet influenced by the double feeling of the triumph at Lens, and the pride of a flight so happily accomplished. The deputies were not only denied the honour of a reception, but they were even compelled to wait on the high road, where the Chancellor Séguier (whom we have seen, in the first part of this history, so inflexibly pursuing a letter, even into the queen's stays,) came to deliver the ultimatum of the court, declaring, that unless the parliament humbled itself before the royal dignity, by condemning all those measures that had produced the quarrel, Paris should be besieged on the following day; that, in anticipation of this siege, the Duke of Orleans had already occupied the bridge of St. Cloud; and that M. le Prince, yet glowing with his victory at Lens, held Charenton and St. Denis.

Unfortunately for the court, to which a moderate answer would probably have added a goodly number of partisans, this threatening response produced a contrary effect to that which had been expected. It wounded the pride of the parliament, which, finding itself vigorously supported by the citizens, to whom Broussel's pardon had revealed the measure of their strength, replied to these letters patent, by declaring, that Cardinal Mazarin was notoriously the author of all these commotions. It further pronounced him the enemy of the

king and the state, and commanded him to leave the court that same day, and France itself in eight days; and after that period, should he not obey, it enjoined all the king's subjects to fall upon him.

This energetic answer, which the court was far from anticipating, outlawed both Mazarin and Paris at the same time. It now only remained to be proved which would gain the day—the parliament or the court.

The court made its preparations for attack, and Paris its preparations for defence. The citizens therefore were completely engaged in the labours customary to them in times of insurrection; that is to say, in unpaving the streets, and stretching chains across them; when they saw the Prince de Conti, the brother of the Prince de Condé, and his brother-in-law, the Duke de Longueville, coming to their assistance, conducted by the coadjutor. From that time they recovered their confidence; for they had now two princes of the blood on their side, and, moreover, the advantage in numbers. It was on the 10th of January that this unhoped-for reinforcement came to the Parisians.

After a stormy debate, the Prince de Conti was named the generalissimo of all the king's armies out of Paris, and the Dukes d'Elbœuf and de Bouillon, with the Marshal de la Mothe, his lieutenant-generals. The Duke de Longueville, without title or command, contented himself with assisting his brother-in-law. As for M. de Beaufort, he was come up from the Vendômois, bringing, say the chronicles, his lofty air his beautiful long locks, and that popularity which ensured him the dominion of the market-places.

The Parisian army was therefore organized with that promptitude which the citizens exhibit in disguising themselves as soldiers, when they are urged forward to such a transformation, by any feeling whatever. On the 19th, the impromptu army had attempted a sortie, rather to convince itself and others of its actual existence, than to attempt anything serious; causing to float above its head, a flag, on which was this singular device—"*We seek our king.*"

The following days were occupied in some trifling and partial operations, that had no other result than the carrying off of some flocks of sheep, and the conflagration of two or three houses.

In this way they reached the first days in February; and it was on the first of that month that our four friends had disembarked at Boulogne, and taken the road to Paris, each party by a different route.

About the close of the fourth day's march, Athos's party cautiously avoided Nanterre, so that they might not fall into the hands of any of the queen's party. It was greatly against Athos's inclination that all these precautions were taken; but Aramis had very judiciously reminded him that they had no right to be imprudent, since they had been charged with a most serious, indeed a sacred mission, by King Charles, and that this mission, received at the foot of the scaffold, could only be accomplished at the feet of the queen. Athos then gave way.

At the faubourgs, our travellers found a strict guard. All Paris was in arms. The sentinel refused to let the gentlemen pass, and called the sergeant. The sergeant immediately came out, and assuming all the importance that the citizens are accustomed to take upon themselves, when they have the honour of being clothed with military dignity—

"Who are you, gentlemen?" demanded he.

"Two gentlemen," replied Athos.

"Whence do you come?"

"From London."

"What are you come to Paris for?"

"To execute a commission for the Queen of England."

"Ah, then! everybody goes now to the Queen of England," replied the sergeant. "We have already three gentlemen at the guard-house, whose passports are being examined, and who are going to the Queen of England. Where are yours

"We have none."

"What! you have no passports?"

"No; we are just arrived from England, as we have told you; and we are completely ignorant of the state of public affairs, having left Paris before the king's departure."

"Ah!" said the sergeant, with a sharp look, "you are Mazarins, and want to come in here as spies."

"My dear friend," said Athos, who had as yet allowed Aramis to reply, "if we were Mazarins, we should, on the contrary, have all the passports we might require. Believe me, in your situation, you should suspect, above all, those who have everything filled up according to rule."

"Go into the guard-house," said the sergeant: "you shall explain everything to the officer on duty."

He made a sign to the sentinel, who drew on one side; the sergeant went first, and the two gentlemen followed him into the guard-house.

This guard-house was entirely occupied by citizens and common people, some of whom were drinking, some playing, and some making speeches. In a corner, and almost concealed from the view, were the three gentlemen who had come in before them, and whose passports were being examined by the officer. This officer was in an adjoining room, the importance of his rank entitling him to a private apartment.

The first impulse of those who had just come in, and of those who had previously entered, was to cast a rapid and searching glance at each other, from the opposite extremities of the guard-room. Those who had first arrived were enveloped in long cloaks, in the folds of which they were carefully concealed. One of them, shorter than his companions, kept himself in the shade behind. At the declaration made by the sergeant, as he entered, that in all probability he was bringing in two Mazarins, the three gentlemen pricked up their ears, and became very attentive. The shortest of the three, who had made two steps forward, drew back again, into the shade. When it was known that the two gentlemen had no passports, it appeared to be the unanimous opinion of the guard-room that they would not be allowed to enter.

"Yes, gentlemen," said Athos, "it is, on the contrary, probable that we shall enter, for we seem to be engaged with rational people. There will be one very simple method of acting, which is, to send our names to her majesty the queen of England; and if she will be answerable for us, I hope that you will feel no hesitation in allowing us to pass."

At these words, the attention of the gentleman concealed in the shade redoubled, and was even accompanied by such a movement of surprise, that his hat, being raised by the cloak that he was more carefully adjusting, fell to the ground. He stooped, and picked it up hastily.

"Oh, my God!" said Aramis, pushing Athos with his elbow, "did you see that?"

"What?" demanded Athos.

"The countenance of the shortest of those three gentlemen?"

"No."

"It appeared to me—but it is impossible—"

At this moment the sergeant, who had gone into the private room, received the orders from the officer on guard, came out, and going up to the three gentlenen, to whom he delivered a paper—"Your passports are correct," said he. "Let these three gentlemen pass."

The three gentlemen bowed, and hastened to take advantage of the permission, and of the power of departure given them by the sergeant's order.

Aramis followed them with his eyes, and, at the moment that the shortest passed him, he pressed Athos's hand.

"What is the matter with you, then, my dear fellow?" demanded Athos.

"The matter is—it is doubtless a vision."

Then addressing the sergeant: "Tell me, sir," he added, "do you know the three gentlemen who have just left the room?"

"I know them by their passports: they are Messieurs de Chatillon, de Flamarens, and de Bruy, three gentlemen frondeurs, who are going to join the Duke de Longueville."

"It is very strange," said Aramis, replying to his own thoughts rather than to the sergeant; "I thought that I detected the Mazarin himself."

The sergeant burst out laughing. "What!" said he, "Mazarin hazard himself in that manner amongst us, to be hanged! Not such a fool as that!"

"Ah!" murmured Aramis, "I may be mistaken: I have not got d'Artagnan's infallible eye."

"Who is talking of d'Artagnan here?" demanded the officer, who at this moment appeared on the threshold.

"Oh!" exclaimed Grimaud, with wide-extended eyes.

"What?" demanded Athos and Aramis at the same time.

"Planchet!" replied Grimaud; "Planchet, with the gorget!"

"M. de la Fère and M. d'Herblay," exclaimed the officer, "returned to Paris! Oh, what delight to me, gentlemen! for, without doubt you are come to join the princes?"

"As you see, my dear Planchet," said Aramis; whilst Athos smiled, on seeing the important rank that the old comrade of Mousqueton, Bazin, and Grimaud, occupied in the city militia.

"And M. d'Artagnan, of whom you were speaking just now, M. d'Herblay—may I venture to inquire whether you know anything about him?"

"We left him four days ago, my dear friend, and everything induces us to imagine that he has reached Paris before us."

"No, sir; I am quite certain he has not entered the capital. Perhaps he stopped at St. Germain."

"I do not think so. We agreed to meet at *la Chevrette*."

"I went tnere this very day."

"And had not the fair Madeline received any intelligence of him," demanded Aramis, smiling.

"No, sir; and I will not conceal from you, that she appeared very uneasy."

"After all," said Aramis, "no time has been lost as yet, and we have been very rapid in our movements. Allow me then, my dear Athos, before asking any more questions about our friend, to congratulate M. Planchet."

"Ah, M. Chevalier!" said Planchet, bowing.

"Lieutenant?" said Aramis.

"Lieutenant, with the promise of being captain."

"It is very splendid," said Aramis; "and how came all these honours to be showered upon you?"

"In the first place, gentlemen, you are aware that I am the person who saved M. de Rochefort?"

"Yes, certainly; he told us that himself."

"I very narrowly escaped being hanged on that occasion by Mazarin, which naturally made me even more popular than I was before."

"And, thanks to this popularity—"

"No, thanks to something better. You also know, gentlemen, that I served in the regiment of Piedmont, where I had the honour of being a sergeant."

"Yes."

"Well, then: one day, when no one could place in line a crowd of armed citizens, who set off, some with the left, and others with the right foot, I managed to make them all march with the same foot, and for this I was made lieutenant on the field of-drill."

"And that is the explanation?" said Aramis.

"I believe," said Athos, "that you have crowds of the nobility with you?"

"Certainly. We have, in the first place, as you doubtless know, the Prince de Conti and the Duke de Longueville, the Duke de Beaufort, the Duke d'Elbœuf, the Duke de Bouillon, the Duke de Chevreuse, M. de Brissac, the Marshal de la Motha, M. de Luynes, the Marquis de Vitry, the Prince de Marsillac, the Marquis de Noirmoutier, the Count de Fiesque, the Marquis de Laignes, the Count de Montrésor, the Marquis de Sevigné, and God knows who besides."

"And M. Raoul de Bragelonne?" demanded Athos, in an agitated voice: "d'Artagnan told me that he recommended him to your notice on leaving Paris, my good Planchet."

"Yes, count, as if he had been his own son; and I may say, that I have not lost sight of him one single moment."

"Then," replied Athos, in a voice tremulous with joy, "he is quite well, and no accident has happened to him?"

"None whatever, sir."

"And he lives—"

"Still at the *Grand Charlemagne*."

"And he passes his time?—"

"Sometimes at the Queen of England's, and sometimes at the house of Madame de Chevreuse. He and the Count de Guiche are inseparable."

"Thank you, Planchet, thank you," said Athos, holding out his hand to him.

"Oh! M. le Count!" said Planchet, touching his hand with the tips of his fingers.

"Well, now, what are you doing, count? To an old lacquey!"

"My friend," said Athos, "he gives me news of Raoul."

"And now, gentlemen," demanded Planchet, who had not heard Aramis's observation, "what do you wish to do?"

"To enter Paris, if, however, you will grant us permission, my dear M. Planchet," said Athos.

"How! If I will give you permission? You are laughing at me, count. I am nothing more than your servant." And he bowed. Then, turning towards his men—"Let these gentlemen pass," said he. "I know them—they are the friends of M. de Beaufort."

"Long live M. de Beaufort!" cried the whole guard with one voice, and opened a passage for Athos and Aramis.

The sergeant alone went up to Planchet. "What, without a passport?" he muttered.

"Yes, without a passport," answered Planchet.

"Observe, captain," he continued, giving Planchet his promised title by anticipation,—"observe, that one of those three men who went out just now, told me, in a low voice, to distrust these gentlemen."

"And I," said Planchet, with considerable dignity, "I know them, and will be responsible for them."

Having said this, he squeezed Grimaud's hand, who appeared to think himself greatly honoured by this distinction.

"To our next meeting then, captain," said Aramis, in his tone of raillery. "Should anything happen to us, we will refer to you."

"Sir," said Planchet, "in that, as in everything else, I am ever your valet."

"The rascal has spirit, and plenty of it too," said Aramis, mounting his horse.

"And how could it be otherwise," said Athos, also placing himself in the saddle, "after having so long brushed his master's hats?"

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE AMBASSADORS.

The two friends immediately pursued their way, descending the steep declivity of the faubourg; but when they had reached the bottom of the hill, they saw, with the utmost astonishment, that the streets of Paris were changed into rivers, and the squares into lakes. In consequence of the great rains that had prevailed in the month of January, the Seine had overflowed, and the river had taken possession of half the capital.

Athos and Aramis boldly entered the water with their horses; but very soon the poor animals were up to the chest, and the two gentlemen were obliged to decide on taking a boat, which they did, after ordering their lacqueys to go and wait for them in the market-place. It was, therefore, in a boat that they entered the Louvre. The night had then closed in; and the pale and quivering light of some lanterns, amid these pools, the boats loaded with patrols with their glittering arms, and the watchwords of the sentinels as they were exchanged at the different gates, gave to Paris an aspect that quite dazzled Aramis, a man as susceptible of warlike impressions as could possibly be met with.

They reached the queen's abode, but were obliged to wait in the antechamber, her majesty having just given an audience to some gentlemen who had brought news from England.

"And we also," said Athos to the servant who gave them this information—"we, also, not only bring intelligence from England, but we are just arrived from that country."

"What are your names, gentlemen?" inquired the servant.

"The Count de la Fère, and the Chevalier d'Herblay," replied Aramis.

"Ah! in that case, gentlemen," said the servant, on hearing these names, which the queen had so often mentioned with hope—"in that case, it is quite another thing, and I believe her majesty would not pardon me were I to make you wait a single instant.

Follow me, then, I pray you." And he went forward, followed by Athos and Aramis.

Having reached the room occupied by the queen, he made them a sign to stop; and opening the door,

"Madame," said he, "I hope that your majesty will pardon this disobedience of your orders, when she knows that those I come to announce are the Count de la Fère, and the Chevalier d'Herblay."

At these two names, the queen uttered an exclamation of joy, which was heard by the gentlemen from the spot where they stood.

"Poor queen!" murmured Athos.

"Oh, let them come in! let them come in!" exclaimed the young princess, rushing towards the door.

The poor child was her mother's constant companion, and endeavoured to make her forget the absence of her sister and her two brothers.

"Come in, come in, gentlemen," said she, opening the door herself.

Athos and Aramis presented themselves before the queen, who was seated in an arm-chair, and before her were standing two of the gentlemen they had met in the guard-room. They were M. de Flamarens, and Gaspard de Coligny, Duke de Chatillon, brother of him who was killed in a duel seven or eight years before, in the Place Royale—a duel that took place on account of Madame de Longueville.

When the two friends were announced, they drew back, and exchanged some words in a low voice, with apparent emotion.

"Well, gentlemen!" exclaimed the queen of England, on seeing Athos and Aramis, "here you are at last, my faithful friends; but the couriers of the government travel even more rapidly than you do. The court received intelligence of the state of affairs in London at the very moment that you reached the gates of Paris; and here are M. de Flamarens, and M. de Chatillon, who bring me the latest information from her majesty the queen, Anne of Austria."

Aramis and Athos looked at each other: that tranquillity, that joy that sparkled in the queen's eyes, overwhelmed them with stupefaction.

"Will you continue?" said she, addressing de Flamarens and the Duke de Chatillon. "You were saying that his majesty Charles I., my august master, had been condemned to death, in defiance of the wishes of the majority of his subjects."

"Yes, madame," stammered out Chatillon.

Athos and Aramis looked at each other in still greater astonishment.

"And that, having been led to the scaffold," continued the queen —"to the scaffold!—oh, my lord! my king!—and that, having been led to the scaffold, he had been saved by the indignant people."

"Yes, madame," replied Chatillon, in a voice so low, that it was with great difficulty that the two friends, although very attentive, could hear this affirmation.

The queen clasped her hands with a generous gratitude, whilst the daughter passed her arm round her mother's neck, and embraced her, with tears of joy flowing from her eyes.

"Now, madame, nothing remains for us, except to present to your majesty our humble respects," said Chatillon, on whom this character appeared to weigh heavily, and who evidently blushed under the fixed and piercing eye of Athos.

"One moment longer," said the queen, retaining them by a sign —"one moment, I beseech you: for here are M. de la Fère, and the Chevalier d'Herblay, who, as you may have heard, are just returned from London, and who, as eye-witnesses, will perhaps give you some particulars that you may not have yet received, and which you can communicate to the queen, my good mother. Speak, gentlemen, speak, I am attentive. Do not conceal anything from me; do not soften anything. So long as his majesty is still alive, and that the royal honour is safe, everything else is indifferent to me."

Athos turned pale, and laid his hand on his heart.

"Well, now!" said the queen, who saw this movement, and this paleness: "speak then, sir, I entreat you."

"Pardon me, madame," replied Athos, "but I do not wish to add anything to the account which these gentlemen have given, until they themselves acknowledge that they have perhaps been mistaken."

"Mistaken!" exclaimed the queen, almost suffocated with agitation. "Mistaken! O, my God! What has happened, then?"

"Gentlemen," said M. de Flamarens to Athos, "if we are mistaken, the error originates with the queen; and you have no intention, I imagine, to correct it, since that would be to give the lie to her majesty."

"With the queen, sir?" demanded Athos, in his calm and sonorous voice.

"Yes," replied Flamarens lowering his eyes.

Athos sighed mournfully.

"May not the error rather originate with him who accompanied you, and whom we saw in the guard-room of the barrier du Roule?" said Aramis, with his insulting politeness: "for, if the Count de la Fère and myself are not both mistaken, you were three on entering Paris."

Chatillon and Flamarens started.

"But explain yourself, count," said the queen, whose anguish increased every moment. "I read despair upon your brow; your lips hesitates to announce some terrible news; your hands tremble —oh, my God! my God! what has happened?"

"Oh, God!" cried the young princess, falling on her knees before her mother, "have pity on us!"

"Sir," said Chatillon, "if you are the bearer of melancholy intelligence, you act most cruelly in announcing it to the queen."

Aramis went up so closely to Chatillon, as nearly to touch him. "Sir," said he, with compressed lips and sparkling eye, "you have not, I imagine, the presumption to wish to teach M. de la Fère and myself what we are to say here?"

During this short altercation, Athos, with his hand still on his heart, and his head depressed, had gone up to the queen. "Madame," said he to her, in an agitated voice, "princes, who by their nature are superior to other men, have received from heaven souls capable of supporting greater misfortunes than the vulgar herd, for their hearts participates in their superiority. I ought not, therefore, I think, to act with your majesty in the same manner as with a woman in my own rank of life. Queen, doomed to every species of

misfortune incident in this world, receive the result of the mission with which you deigned to honour us."

And Athos, kneeling before the queen, who was panting with agitation, drew from his bosom, enclosed in the same box, the diamond order which the queen had delivered to Lord de Winter before their departure, and the wedding ring, which, before his death, Charles had entrusted to Aramis, and which, since he had received them, had never been out of Athos's possession. He opened the box, and presented it to the queen with a mute and profound grief.

The queen stretched out her hand, seized the ring, pressed it convulsively to her lips, and, without being able to emit a sigh, without the power even of sending forth a sob, she extended her arms, turned pale, and fell insensible into the arms of her attendants and her daughter.

Athos kissed the hem of the robe of the unhappy widow; then rising, with a dignity that made a deep impression on the attendants—"I, Count de la Fère," said he, "a gentleman who have never lied—I swear, first in the presence of God, and then in the presence of this poor queen, that everything that it was possible to do to save the king was done by us, on the soil of England. Now, chevalier," he added, turning towards d'Herblay, "let us go. We have performed our duty."

"Not yet," said Aramis: "there remains one word to say to these gentlemen." And turning towards Chatillon—"Sir," said he, "will you be so obliging as to leave the room, if it be only for a minute, to hear that word which I cannot speak before the queen?"

Chatillon bowed an assent, without answering. Athos and Aramis went out first; Chatillon and Flamarens followed them. They traversed the vestibule in silence; but on gaining a terrace, on a level with a window, Aramis led the way along this terrace, which was quite private. At the window he stopped; and turning towards the Duke de Chatillon—

"Sir," said he, "you gave yourself the liberty, just now, it appears to me, to treat us very cavalierly. This was improper

under any circumstances; but much more so on the part of men who came to bring the queen the message of a liar."

"Sir!" exclaimed Chatillon.

"What, then, have you done with M. de Bruy," demanded Aramis ironically. "Is he gone perchance to change his countenance, which too much resembles that of Mazarin? It is well known that there are a great number of Italian masks in use at the Palais Royal, from that of harlequin to that of pantaloon."

"You mean to provoke us I think," said Flamarens.

"Ah! you only *think* so, gentlemen?"

"Chevalier! chevalier!" said Athos.

"Let me alone," said Aramis, sharply: "you know very well, that I do not like these things to be procrastinated."

"Finish then, sir," said Chatillon, with a haughtiness not at all inferior to that of Aramis.

Aramis bowed. "Gentlemen," said he, "any other person than myself or the Count de la Fère would cause you to be arrested, for we have some friends in Paris; but we offer you a means of departure without anxiety. Come and gossip with us for five minutes, sword in hand, on this solitary terrace."

"Willingly," replied Chatillon.

"One moment, gentlemen!" exclaimed Flamarens: "I am well aware that the proposition is very tempting, but, at present, it is impossible for us to accept it."

"Why so?" said Aramis, in a tone of mockery: "is it the proximity of Mazarin that makes you so prudent?"

"Oh! do you hear, Flamarens?" said Chatillon: "not to answer it would be a stain on my name and my honour."

"That is also my opinion," said Aramis, coolly.

"You will not answer it, however," said Flamarens; "and these gentlemen will, I am sure, soon agree with me."

Aramis tossed his head with a gesture of indescribable insolence. Chatillon saw the gesture, and placed his hand upon his sword.

"Duke," said Flamarens, "you forget that, to-morrow, you command an expedition of the very greatest importance, and that,

selected by the prince, and favourably accepted by the queen, you are not your own master until to-morrow evening."

"So be it!—for the morning of the day after to-morrow, then," said Aramis.

"Till the day after to-morrow," said Chatillon, "is a long time, gentlemen."

"I am not the person who fixes this time, and who asks for this delay," retorted Aramis. "Besides, it appears to me," he added "that we might meet on this expedition."

"Yes, sir, you are right," exclaimed Chatillon, "and with the greatest pleasure, if you will take the trouble of coming as far as the gates of Charenton."

"Faith, sir, to have the honour of meeting you, I would go to the end of the world; much more then will I go a couple of leagues for the same purpose."

"Very well. To-morrow, sir."

"You may depend upon me. Go, therefore, and rejoin your cardinal. But, first of all, swear by your honour that you will not inform him of our return."

"What! conditions?"

"And why not?"

"Because it belongs to conquerors alone to require them, and you are not yet in that condition, gentlemen."

"Then let us draw immediately. It is quite the same thing to us, who have not the command of to-morrow's expedition."

Chatillon and Flamarens looked at each other. There was such a tone of irony in Aramis's words and actions, that Chatillon, more especially, had great difficulty in bridling his anger. But, on a word from Flamarens, he restrained himself.

"Well, then, so let it be," said he; "our companion, whoever he may be, shall know nothing of what has passed. But you, sir, on your part, promise me to be at Charenton to-morrow, do you not, sir?"

"Ah!" replied Aramis, "make yourselves perfectly easy on that score, gentlemen."

The four gentlemen bowed; but this time it was Chatillon and

Flamarens who first left the Louvre, and Athos and Aramis followed them.

"Against whom, then, are you so furious, Aramis?" demanded Athos.

"Ah, by Jove! against those with whom I have just quarrelled."

"What, then, have they done to you?"

"Why, they—— But did you not see it?"

"No."

"They sneered when you said that we had done our duty in England. Now, they either believed it, or they did not believe it. If they did believe it, they sneered with the intention of insulting us; if they did not believe us, they insulted us still more; and it is absolutely necessary to let them know that we are good for something. After all, I am not sorry that they have deferred the thing till to-morrow. I believe we have something better to do this evening than to draw our swords."

"What have we to do?"

"Zounds! have we not to get possession of the Mazarin?"

Athos thrust out his lips contemptuously. "Such expeditions do not suit me, you know, Aramis."

"Why so?"

"Because they resemble stratagems."

"Really, Athos, you would be a singular general of an army: you could only fight in open daylight; you would send your adversary word of the very hour you meant to attack him; and you would be most careful that no attempt should be made on him during the night, for fear that he should accuse you of taking advantage of the obscurity."

Athos smiled. "You know," said he, "that no one can change his nature. And, besides, do you rightly understand our position, and whether the arrest of Mazarin might not be rather an evil, than an advantage—an inconvenience, rather than a triumph?"

"Say at once, Athos, that you disapprove of my proposition."

"No; on the contrary, I think that it is fair play. Nevertheless—"

"Nevertheless, what?"

"I think you ought not to have made those gentlemen swear that they would say nothing to Mazarin; for, by so doing, you have almost engaged not to do anything yourself."

"I engaged for nothing, I assure you; I consider myself as perfectly—But come, come!"

"Where?"

"To M. de Beaufort, or M. de Bouillon: we will lay the circumstances before them."

"Yes, but upon one condition: that we shall begin with the coadjutor. He is a priest—he is skilled in case of conscience; and will lay ours before him."

"Ah!" said Aramis, "he will spoil all—he will appropriate all. Instead of commencing, let us finish with him."

Athos smiled. He saw that he had an idea at the bottom of his heart, which he did not disclose. "Very well," said he; "with whom shall we begin?"

"With M. de Bouillon, if you like: he is the first on our road."

"Now you will allow me to do one thing, will you not?"

"What is that?"

"To pass by the hotel *du Grand Charlemagne*, that I may embrace Raoul."

"Yes, indeed; I will go there with you, and we will embrace him together."

They then took to the boat that had brought them to the Louvre and were carried to the market-place. There they found Grimaud and Blaisois, who were holding their horses; and all four proceeded to the rue Guénégaud. But Raoul was not at the hotel *du Grand Charlemagne*. He had received a message from the prince that morning, and had departed with Olivain as soon as he had received it.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE THREE LIEUTENANTS OF THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF.

As it had been agreed, and in the order which they had determined, Athos and Aramis, on leaving the hotel *du Grand Charlemagne*, proceeded towards the hotel of the Duke de Bouillon. The night was dark, and although approaching the silent and solitary hours, it continued to resound with those numerous noises that suddenly awake a besieged city. At every step they met with barricades, at each turn they came against chains stretched across the streets, and bivouacs of soldiers. The patrols crossed each other, exchanging the watch-words; messengers sent by the different chiefs, were perpetually seen; in fine, animated dialogues, that proved the general excitement, were taking place between the pacific inhabitants, who were leaning out of their windows, and the more warlike citizens, who ran through the streets, armed with partisan or arquebus.

Aramis and Athos had not proceeded a hundred paces, before they were stopped by sentinels placed at the barricades, who demanded the watch-word; but as they replied, that they were going to the Duke de Bouillon's, to give him some important information, they contented themselves with giving them a guide, who, under pretence of accompanying and clearing the way for them, was ordered to watch them. This man had set off before them, singing,

"The brave Duke de Bouillon
Is laid up with the gout——"

This was one of the newest *triolets*, * which was composed of I know not now many couplets, in parts.

On reaching the neighbourhood of the hotel de Bouillon, they crossed a small troop of three horsemen, who had all the watch-words, for they were proceeding without guide or escort, and who,

* A *triolet* is a peculiar French couplet, of eight lines, in which the first and second lines are repeated after the sixth. In the present instance, only the two first lines are given, which do not rhyme in the original.—Tr.

on reaching the barricades, had only to exchange some words with those who guarded them, to be allowed to pass, with all the deference, no doubt, due to their rank. On their appearance, Athos and Aramis stopped.

"Oho!" said Aramis, "do you see, count?"

"Yes," replied Athos.

"What do you think of these three horsemen?"

"What do you think of them, Aramis?"

"That they are our men."

"You are not mistaken. I perfectly distinguished M. de Flamarens."

"And I, M. de Chatillon."

"As for the cavalier in the brown cloak—"

"It was the cardinal."

"In person."

'How the deuce dare they thus hazard themselves so near the hotel de Bouillon?" demanded Aramis.

Athos smiled, but did not reply; and in five minutes after, they knocked at the prince's door. It was guarded by a sentinel, as is the custom with men of superior rank; and a small picket was established in the courtyard, ready to obey the behests of the lieutenant of the Prince de Conti.

As the ballad declared, the duke had the gout, and was in bed; but in spite of this serious indisposition, that had prevented his mounting his horse for a month—that is to say, since Paris had been besieged—he was not the less disposed to receive the Count de la Fère, and the Chevalier d'Herblay. The two friends were therefore introduced into the Duke de Bouillon's apartment. The invalid was in bed, but surrounded by the most complete assortment of military ornaments that could possibly be met with. There was nothing suspended from the walls, but swords, pistols, cuirasses, and arquebusses; and it was quite evident, that, as soon as he got rid of the gout, M. de Bouillon would give the enemies of the parliament a pretty skein of thread to unravel. In the meantime, to his great regret, as he said, he was obliged to keep his bed.

"Ah, gentlemen," he exclaimed, on perceiving his two visitors,

and making such an effort to raise himself on his bed, as extracted from him a painful grimace—"you are happy! You can mount your horses, come and go, and fight for the cause of the people. But I, as you may perceive, am nailed to my bed. Ah, this infernal gout!" said he, making another grimace—"this infernal gout!"

"Your excellence," said Athos, "we are just returned from England, and our first step, on reaching Paris, has been to come and inquire after your health."

"Many thanks, gentlemen, many thanks!" replied the duke: "very bad, as you may see, my health—this infernal gout! Ah, you are just come from England? And King Charles is quite well, as I have this minute heard?"

"He is dead, your excellence," said Aramis.

"Bah!" said the astonished duke.

"Dead on the scaffold—condemned by the parliament."

"Impossible!"

"And executed in our presence."

"What was it, then, that M. de Flamarens was telling me?"

"M. de Flamarens!" said Aramis.

"Yes; he has just left me."

Athos smiled.

"With two companions?" said Aramis.

"Yes, with two companions," replied the duke. Then he added, with some anxiety: "Can you have met them?"

"Yes, in the street, we believe," said Athos. And he looked with a smile at Aramis, who, on his side, regarded him with no slight astonishment.

"This infernal gout!" exclaimed M. de Bouillon, evidently rather uneasy.

"Your excellence," said Athos, "really it requires all your great devotion to the Parisian cause to remain suffering you are, at the head of armies; and your perseverance excites the admiration of M. d'Herblay and myself."

"What would you have, gentlemen? It is absolutely necessary; and your are yourselves examples of it—you, so brave and devoted

—you, to whom my dear colleague, the Duke de Beaufort, owes his liberty, and perhaps his life;—it is absolutely necessary to sacrifice oneself for the public good. Therefore, you see, I sacrifice myself; but I confess to you that my strength is exhausted. The heart is good, the head is good. But this devil's own gout destroys me; and I confess that, if the court did justice to my demands—demands which are very equitable, for I only require an indemnity promised by the old cardinal himself, when he deprived me of my principality of Sedan—if they gave me domains of equal value, and indemnified me for the deprivation of this property since it was taken from me—that is to say, for eight years; if the title of prince were accorded to those of my family, and my brother Turenne reinstated in his command, why then I would immediately retire to my estates, and let the court and parliament settle their affairs as they thought fit."

"And your excellence would be quite right," replied Athos.

"It is your opinion, is it not, Count de la Fère?"

"Entirely so."

"And yours, also, Chevalier d'Herblay?"

"Perfectly so."

'Well then, I confess to you, gentlemen," resumed the duke, "that in all probability it is that which I shall adopt. The court is at present making overtures to me; and it only rests with me to accept them. Up to this time I have rejected them; but since such men as you say that I am wrong, and above all, as this horrid gout renders it impossible for me to be of any service to the cause of the Parisians, why, faith, I have a great mind to follow your advice, and to accept the proposition that M. de Chatillon has just made me."

"Accept it, prince, accept it, said Aramis.

"Faith, and I will then. I am even sorry that I almost rejected it this evening. But there is a conference to-morrow, and we shall see." The two friends bowed to the duke.

"Go, gentlemen," said he," "go, you must be very much fatigued with your journey. Poor king Charles! But, after all, he was a little in fault in the business; and what ought to console us is,

that France has nothing to reproach herself with on the occasion, and that she did all she could to save him."

"Oh, as to that," said Aramis, "we are witnesses to it—M. Mazarin, in particular!"

"Well, now, I am very glad that you render him this testimony. He is good at the core, that cardinal; and if he were not a foreigner—Ah, well, they will do him justice at last. Oh! this infernal gout!"

Athos and Aramis left the room, but the cries of M. de Bouillon followed them even to the antechamber. It was evident that the poor prince suffered the tortures of the damned.

Having reached the street door: "Well, now," said Aramis, "what do you think?"

"Of what?"

"Of M. de Bouillon?"

"My friend I think, what the *triolet* of our guide thinks," replied Athos—

"The poor Duke de Bouillon
Is laid up with the gout——"

"Therefore," said Aramis, "I did not breathe a syllable to him of the object that took us to his house."

"And you acted prudently: you would have brought on a violent fit. Let us now go to M. de Beaufort."

And the two friends proceeded towards the hotel de Vendôme. It struck ten o'clock just as they reached it. The hotel was as well guarded, and presented an aspect equally warlike, as that of M. de Bouillon. There were sentinels, a picket in the court, piles of arms, and horses, ready saddled, fastened to the rings. Two horsemen were coming out just as Athos and Aramis entered, so that the latter were obliged to draw their horses back to let them pass.

"Ah, gentlemen," said Aramis, "this is decidedly our night for meeting; and I confess that we shall be very unfortunate, after having met so often this evening, if we cannot manage to meet to-morrow."

"Oh! as for that, sir," replied Chatillon, for it was he who was

leaving the Duke of Beaufort's house with Flamarens—"you may make yourself perfectly easy. If we meet during the night, without looking after each other, much more shall we meet during the day, when we desire it."

"I hope so sir," said Aramis.

"And I am sure of it," replied the duke.

Flamarens and Chatillon proceeded on their way, and Athos and Aramis dismounted.

Scarcely had they thrown the bridles of their horses over the arms of their lacqueys, and disencumbered themselves of their cloaks, before a man came up to them, and after having looked at them for a minute, by the doubtful light of a lantern hung up in the middle of the court, he sent forth an exclamation of surprise, and came and threw himself into their arms.

"Count de la Fère!" he exclaimed—"Chevalier d'Herblay! how came you to be in Paris?"

"Rochefort!" said the two friends, at the same time.

"Yes certainly. We came up from Vendômois, as you know, four or five days ago, and we are preparing to give some trouble to Mazarin. You are still of our party, I presume?"

"More so than ever. And the duke?"

"He is furious against Mazarin. You are aware of our dear duke's success? He is the real king of Paris: he cannot go out without being almost stifled."

"Ah! so much the better," said Aramis. "But, tell me, was it not M. de Flamarens and M. de Chatillon who this moment went out?"

"Yes, they have just had an audience of the duke. They come from Mazarin; but they will have found whom they had to deal with, I'll answer for it."

"All in good time," said Athos. "But can one have the honour of an interview with his highness?"

Certainly, and this very instant, too; you know that he is always visible to you. Follow me: I claim the honour of presenting you."

Rochefort preceded them. All the doors opened before him, and

the two friends. They found M. de Beaufort just going to place himself at table. The thousand occupations of the evening had delayed his supper until that hour; but in spite of the importance of the circumstance, the prince no sooner heard the names announced by Rochefort, than he arose from the chair which he was just drawing towards the table, and came eagerly forward to meet the friends.

"Ah, by Jove!" said he, "welcome, gentlemen. You are come to partake of my supper, are you not? Boisjoli, inform Noirmont that I have two guests. You know Noirmont, do you not, gentlemen? He is my *maître d'hotel*, the successor of Father Marteau, who manufactures excellent pasties, as you know. Boisjoli, let him send one of his genuine ones, but not of the kind that he made for la Ramée. Thank God! we do not now want a ladder of ropes, a dagger, and choke-pear."

"Your excellence," said Athos, "do not, on our account, inconvenience your illustrious *maître d'hotel*, with whose numerous and varied talents we are well acquainted. This evening, with your highness's permission, we will only have the honour of inquiring after your health, and of taking your orders."

"Oh, as to my health, you may see, gentlemen, it is excellent. The health that could withstand five years in the Bastile, with the addition of M. de Chavigny, is able to bear everything. As for my orders, faith, I confess that I should be much embarrassed to give you any, seeing that every one gives his own, and that I shall finish, should this continue, by giving none at all."

"Indeed," said Athos: "I thought, however, that it was upon your union that the parliament depended."

"Ah, yes! our union—it is a fine thing. With the Duke de Bouillon, all goes on well as yet: he has got the gout, does not leave his bed, and one can manage to agree with him. But as for M. d'Elbœuf, and his three elephants of sons—do you know the *triolet* on the Duke d'Elbœuf, gentlemen?"

"No, your excellence."

"Indeed!" The duke began to sing:—

"Monsieur d'Elbœuf and his three big sons,
In the Place Royale are mighty ones;
At home, they fear nor guns nor daggers,
Well done, d'Elbœuf, and thy three braggers!
But when in the field the fighting comes,
Good-by to the courage of d'Elbœuf's sons.
Monsieur d'Elbœuf and his three big sons,
In the Place Royale are mighty ones."

"But," said Athos, "this is not also the case with the coadjutor, I hope?"

"Ah, yes! With the coadjutor, it is even worse. God preserve you from factious prelates, especially when they carry a cuirass over their simar. Instead of keeping himself quiet in his bishopric, to sing *Te Deums* for the victories that we do not gain, or for the victories where we are beaten, do you know what he does?"

"No."

"He raises a regiment, to which he gives his name—the regiment of Corinth. He makes lieutenants and captains, neither more nor less than a marshal of France, and colonels like the king."

"Yes," said Aramis; "but when there is any fighting, I hope he then keeps in his archiepiscopal palace?"

"Not at all. There you are mistaken, my dear d'Herblay. When there is any fighting, he fights; so that, as the death of his uncle has given him a seat in parliament, he is now perpetually on his legs, either in the parliament, at the council, or in the combat. The Prince de Conti is general in the picture—but what a picture! A hump-backed general! A sack of walnuts would be just as good. Ah! all this goes on but badly, gentlemen—all this goes on very badly."

"So that your highness is discontented?" said Athos, exchanging a look with Aramis.

"Discontented, count? Say that my highness is furious. So much so—I tell it to you, though I would not do it to others—so much so, that, if the queen were to confess her faults towards me, if she recalled my mother from exile, and gave me the reversion of the admiralty, which now belongs to my father, and was promised me at his death—well, then, I should not be disinclined to train

dogs whom I would teach to say, that there are greater thieves in France than M. Mazarin."

It was no longer merely a look, but a look and a smile, that Athos and Aramis exchanged; and even had they not met them, they would have surmised that Flamarens and Chatillon had been here also. Therefore they did not breathe a word of M. Mazarin's presence in Paris.

"Your excellence," said Athos, "we are now quite satisfied. We had no other motive in coming here, at this time of night, than to show our devotion to your highness, and to tell you that we are still at your service, as your most faithful followers."

"As my most faithful friends, gentlemen—as my most faithful friends. You have given me proof of it; and should I ever be reconciled to the court, I shall prove, I hope, that I also have remained your friend, as well as the friend of those other gentlemen—what the plague do you call them—d'Artagnan and Porthan?"

"D'Artagnan and Porthos."

"Ah, yes! that is it. Therefore you understand, Count de la Fère, you understand, Chevalier d'Herblay, I am entirely and always yours."

Athos and Aramis bowed and left the room

"My dear Athos," said Aramis, "I verily believe that you consented to accompany me, God forgive me! only to give me a lesson."

"Wait now, my dear fellow," said Athos: "it will be time for you to discover this, when we leave the coadjutor's house."

"Come along, then, to the archiepiscopal palace," said Aramis.

And they went towards the city. On approaching the cradle of Paris, Athos and Aramis found the streets inundated, and they were obliged again to take a boat. It was past eleven o'clock; but it was well known that there was no fixed hour for presenting oneself before the coadjutor, his incredible activity turning night into day, according to the exigency of circumstances.

The archiepiscopal palace arose above the waters; and it might have been imagined, from the number of boats moored against the sides, all round the palace, that one was not in Paris, but at Venice. These boats went backwards and forwards, crossing each

other in every sense, burying themselves in the mazes of the streets of the city, or disappearing in the direction of the arsenal, or the quay St. Victor, where they floated as on a lake. Some of these boats were mute and mysterious; others, noisy and brilliantly lighted. The two friends glided along through this world of little vessels, and landed in their turn.

The entire ground floor of the palace was inundated; but a kind of stairs had been fitted to the walls, and the only change that had resulted from the inundation, was, that instead of entering by the doors, they entered by the windows. It was thus that Athos and Aramis landed in the prelate's anteroom. This anteroom was filled with lacqueys, for a dozen gentlemen of rank were crowded into the waiting-room.

"My God," said Aramis, "look there, Athos! Can this puppy of a coadjutor be going to give us the pleasure of kicking our heels in his antechamber?"

Athos smiled. "My dear friend," said he, "you must take men with all the incongruities of their position. The coadjutor is, at this moment, one of the seven or eight kings who reign in Paris. He has a court."

"Yes," said Aramis, "but we are not courtiers."

"Therefore let us send up our names; and should he not, on hearing them, give us a proper answer, well, then, we will leave him to the affairs of France, and his own. It is only to find a lacquey, and put a demi-pistole into his hand."

"Well, really," exclaimed Aramis, "I am not mistaken. Yes —no—yes, it is! Bazin, come here, you rascal!"

Bazin, who, clothed in his ecclesiastical robes, was at that moment crossing the ante-room most majestically, turned round with a frown, to discover the impertinent fellow who thus apostrophized him. But scarcely had he recognised Aramis, before the tiger became a lamb, and coming up to the two gentlemen—"What!" said he, "is it really you, M. le Chevalier? Is it you, count! Here you are, at the very moment that we were so uneasy about you. Oh, how happy I am to see you again!"

"Very well, very well, Master Bazin," said Aramis: "but a

truce with compliments. We are come to see the coadjutor; but we are in haste, and must see him immediately."

"Certainly—this instant," said Bazin: "it is not such gentlemen as you who are to wait in anterooms. Only, at this precise moment, he is in secret conference with one M. de Bruy."

"De Bruy!" exclaimed both Athos and Aramis.

"Yes, I announced him myself, and perfectly remember his name. Do you know him, sir?" added Bazin, turning towards Armis.

"I fancy that I do know him."

"I cannot say the same myself," replied Bazin; "for he was so closely muffled up in his cloak, that do all I could, I was not able to see the smallest bit of his face. But I will go and announce you; and then, perhaps, I may be more fortunate."

"It is quite useless," said Aramis: "we abandon the idea of seeing the coadjutor this evening; do we not, Athos?"

"As you please," answered the count.

"Yes; he has affairs of too much importance to discuss with this M. de Bruy."

"And shall I inform him that you gentlemen came to the palace?"

"No, it is not worth the trouble," said Aramis. "Come, Athos."

And the two friends, making their way through the crowd of lacqueys, left the archiepiscopal abode, followed by Bazin, who testified to their importance by the profusion of his bows.

"Well, now," demanded Athos, when they were again in the boat; "do you not begin to think, my friend, that we should have only played these gentry a scurvy trick, had we arrested M. de Mazarini?"

"You are wisdom personified, Athos," replied Aramis.

What had more especially struck the two friends was, the slight importance that the court of France had attributed to the terrible events that had happened in England, and which seemed to them as if they ought to engage the attention of all Europe. In fact, except the poor widow, and the royal orphan, who were weeping in a corner of the Louvre, no one appeared to know that King Charles I. had ever existed, or that this king had just perished on the scaffold.

The two friends made an appointment to meet at ten o'clock in the morning; for, although the night was far advanced when they reached the door of the hotel, Aramis pretended that he had yet several visits of importance to pay, and allowed Athos to enter alone.

The next morning, as it struck ten, they again met. Since six o'clock in the morning, Athos had himself been out.

"Well, have you gained any intelligence?" demanded Athos.

"None whatever. D'Artagnan has not been seen anywhere, and Porthos has not yet made his appearance. And on your side?"

"Nothing."

"The fiend!" said Aramis.

"In fact," said Athos, "this delay is not natural. They took the most direct road, and, consequently, ought to have arrived before us."

"Add, also," said Aramis, "that we are aware of the rapidity of d'Artagnan's manœuvres, and that he is not the man to have lost an hour, knowing that we were waiting for him."

"He calculated, if you remember, on being here by the 5th."

"And we are now at the 9th. This evening terminates the period fixed for waiting."

"What do you think of doing," demanded Athos, "should we receive no intelligence of them this evening?"

"Set to work, searching for them, to be sure."

"Very well," said Athos.

"But Raoul?" demanded Aramis.

A slight cloud passed over the count's brow. "Raoul gives me a good deal of anxiety," said he. "Yesterday, he received a message from the Prince de Condé; he went to join him at St. Cloud, and is not returned."

"Have you not seen Madame de Chevreuse?"

"She was not at home. And you, Aramis, you went, I suppose, to Madame de Longueville's?"

"Yes, I did."

"Well, then?"

"She was not at home, either; but she had left the address of her new abode."

"And where was she?"

"Guess? I will give you a thousand times."

"How do you suppose I can guess where any one is at midnight? for I presume that it was on leaving me that you went to her. How can you imagine that I can guess where the most beautiful and the most active of all the ladies of the fronde is at midnight?"

"At the Hotel de Ville, my dear fellow!"

"At the Hotel de Ville! Is she, then, appointed the civic king of Paris?"

"No; but she has constituted herself queen of Paris *ad interim*; and as she did not like, just at first, to establish herself at the Palais Royal, or at the Tuilleries, she has installed herself in the Hotel de Ville, where she is going, incontinently, to present the dear duke with an heir or an heiress."

'Why did you not impart this intelligence to me before?" said Athos.

"Bah! Really it was sheer forgetfulness; therefore you must excuse me."

"Now, what shall we do until the evening?" demanded Athos. "We really have nothing to do, it appears."

"You forget, my friend, that we have plenty of work cut out for us."

"Where?"

"At Charenton, to be sure! I have hopes of meeting there, according to promise, a certain M. de Chatillon, whom I have a long time detested."

"What for?"

"Because he is the brother of a certain M. de Coligny."

"Ah, that is true, I had forgotten it!—he who presumed to aspire to the honour of being your rival. But he was most cruelly punished for that audacity, my dear fellow, and that ought, to satisfy you."

"Yes, but what would you have? That does not satisfy me. I am rancorous: it is the sole point by which I hold my connexion

with the church. But after all, you understand, Athos, there is no obligation on you to follow me."

"Come, now," said Athos, "you are merely jesting."

"In that case, my dear fellow, and if you are determined to follow me, there is no time to lose: the drum is beating. I met the cannon just setting off—I saw the citizens placing themselves in order of battle on the place of the Hotel de Ville; and there is certainly going to be an engagement in the direction of Charenton, as the Duke de Chatillon said yesterday."

"I should have thought," said Athos, "that the conferences of the night would have made some alteration in these warlike preparations."

"Yes, without doubt; but they will fight nevertheless, were it only more completely to mask these conferences."

"Poor people!" said Athos, "they go to get themselves killed, that M. de Bouillon may obtain possession of Sedan, that M. de Beaufort may procure the reversion of the admiralty, and that the coadjutor may become a cardinal!"

"Come, come, my dear fellow," said Aramis, "confess that you would not be so philosophical, were not your Raoul mixed up with all this squabble."

"Perhaps you say the truth, Aramis."

"Well, then, let us go where there is fighting; it is a sure method of finding d'Artagnan, Porthos, and perhaps Raoul."

"Alas!" said Athos.

"My good friend," said Aramis, "now that we are in Paris, it is absolutely necessary, believe me, that you should lose that habit of constantly sighing. One must suit oneself to the times, Athos. Do you no longer wear a sword, and have you become a churchman? There, look at those handsome citizens, who are passing: it is quite charming, upon my soul! And that captain, do you see? he really has almost a military gait."

"They are coming out of the rue du Mouton."

"With drums at their head, like real live soldiers. But look, then, at that rogue: how he carries himself—how he struts!"

"Heu!" said Grimaud.

"What?" demanded Athos.

"Planchet, sir."

"Lieutenant yesterday," said Aramis, "captain to-day, colonel to-morrow without doubt; in eight days the rogue will be a marshal of France."

"Let us procure some information from him," said Athos.

And the two friends went up to Planchet, who, prouder than ever to be seen on duty, deigned to explain to the two gentlemen, that he had received orders to take up a position on the Place Royale, with two hundred men, forming the rear-guard of the Parisian army, and to direct himself on Charenton when he was wanted.

As Athos and Aramis were going in the same direction, they escorted Planchet to his post. Planchet made his men manœuvre skilfully enough on the Place Royale, and drew them up in the rear of a long line of citizens, who were placed in the rue and faubourg de St. Antoine, waiting for the signal of battle.

"The day will be a hot one," said Planchet, in his most warlike tone.

"Yes, no doubt," said Aramis; "but the enemy are a long way off."

"We shall soon shorten the distance," said a leader of ten men.

Aramis bowed. Then turning towards Athos: "I do not much like encamping in the Place Royale with all these gentry," said he. "Shall we go forward? We shall see the state of affairs rather better."

"And, besides, M. de Chatillon will not come to look for you in the Place Royale—is it not so? Come then, let us go forward, my friend."

"Have you not two words to say on your own part to M. de Flamarens?"

"My friend," replied Athos, "I have formed a resolution never to draw my sword again, unless I am absolutely compelled to do so."

"And how long is it since you formed this resolution?"

"Since I drew my dagger."

"Ah, good! Another memorial of M. Mordaunt. Well, then, my dear friend, only one thing more is wanting, which is, to feel remorse for having slain him!"

"Hush!" said Athos, putting his finger on his lips, with that melancholy smile peculiar to himself: "let us not talk any more of Mordaunt—it will bring us misfortune." And Athos pushed forward towards Charenton, skirting the faubourg, then the valley of Fécamp, all darkened with the armed citizens.

It is superfluous to say, that Aramis followed him, half a horse's length behind.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE COMBAT OF CHARENTON.

As Athos and Aramis passed the different corps drawn up on the road, they saw the burnished and glittering cuirasses beginning to succeed the rusty arms, and the bright muskets the speckled partisans.

"I fancy that this is the real battle-field," said Aramis. "Do you see that body of cavalry, that is drawn up in front of the bridge, with pistol in hand? Ah! take care—here comes the artillery."

"Ah, my dear fellow," said Athos, "where have you brought us? I fancy that I can see, all round us, the countenances of those who belong to the royal army. Is that not M. de Chatillon himself who is coming forward, with his two brigadiers?"

And Athos drew his sword; whilst Aramis, thinking that he had gone beyond the limits of the Parisian camp, put his hand to his holster.

"Good morning to you, gentlemen," said the duke, coming up: "I perceive that you are completely ignorant of what is going on; but one word will explain it all: there is a conference. The Prince, M. de Retz, M. de Beaufort, and M. de Bouillon, are this moment talking politics. Now, from two different circumstances

there will be one and the same result: either there will be no accommodation, and we shall meet, chevalier; or they will come to some arrangement, and, as I shall then be relieved from my command, we shall still meet."

"Sir," said Aramis, "you speak wonderfully well. Allow me, then, to ask you one question?"

"Certainly, Sir."

"Where are the plenipotentiaries?"

"At Charenton, in the second house on the right as you enter from Paris."

"And was not this conference foreseen?"

"No, gentlemen. It is, it appears, the result of some new propositions that M. Mazarin made to the Parisians yesterday evening."

Athos and Aramis looked at each other laughing. They knew, better than any one else, what these propositions were, to whom they had been made, and who had made them.

"And this house, where the plenipotentiaries are," demanded Athos, "belongs to—?"

"M. de Chanleu, who commands your troops, at Charenton. I say your troops, because I presume that you gentlemen are frondeurs."

"Why, pretty nearly so," said Aramis.

"How! pretty nearly so?"

"Certainly, sir. You know, as well as any one else, that in these times, it is impossible exactly to say what one really is."

"We are for the king and the princes," said Athos.

"You must, however, understand us," said Chatillon: "the king is with us, and has for his commanders-in-chief, M. d'Orleans, and M. de Conde."

"Yes," said Athos, "but his place is in our ranks, with M. de Conti, M. de Beaufort, M. d'Elbœuf, and M. de Bouillon."

That may all be very true," replied Chatillon; "and, for my part, it is very well known I have but slight sympathy for M. Mazarin. My interests, also, are all in Paris: I am there engaged in a serious lawsuit, on which depends all my fortune; and, as you now see me, I have just been to consult my lawyer."

"At Paris?"

"No, at Charenton: M. Viole, whom you must know by name—an excellent man, only a little wilful: but he is not in the parliament for nothing. I calculated on seeing him yesterday evening; but our meeting prevented my occupying myself with my own affairs. However, as business must be attended to, I took advantage of the truce; and that is the reason why I am now in the midst of your people."

"Does M. Viole give his consultations in the open air?" demanded Aramis, laughing.

"Yes, sir, and even on horseback. He commands two hundred good pistol shots to-day; and I paid him a visit, accompanied, to do him honour, by these two small pieces of cannon, at the head of which you appeared so astonished to see me. I confess that I did not know him at first: he has a long sword over his robe, and pistols at his girdle, which give him a formidable air, that would quite delight you, if you had the pleasure to meet him."

"If he is such a curious sight, it would be worth while to look for him," said Aramis

"Then you must make haste, sir, for the conferences cannot last much longer."

"And, should they be broken off without producing any result," said Athos, "are you going to endeavour to take Charenton?"

"Those are my orders. I command the troops destined for the attack, and will do my best to succeed."

"Sir," said Athos, "since you command the cavalry—"

"Pardon me. I am commander-in-chief."

"Still better. You must know all the officers—I mean all those who are at all distinguished."

"Yes, pretty nearly so."

"Would you, then, be good enough to tell me if you have not under your orders the Chevalier d'Artagnan, a lieutenant of musketeers;"

"No, sir, he is not with us. He quitted Paris six weeks ago, and, it is said, is gone on a mission to England."

"I knew that, but believed that he was returned."

"No, sir, I do not know that any one has seen him; and I can

answer you the better on this subject, because the musketeers are with us, and it is M. de Cambon who, in the meantime, fills M. d'Artagnan's situation."

The two friends looked at each other.

"You see," said Athos.

"It is very strange," said Aramis.

"Some misfortune must positively have happened to them on the road."

"To-day is the 8th, and the term appointed for waiting expires this evening. Should we receive no intelligence of them to-night, we will depart to-morrow morning."

Athos gave a nod of assent. Then, turning round: "And M. de Bragelonne, a young man of fifteen years of age, attached to the prince," demanded Athos, somewhat confused at thus displaying his paternal anxiety before the sceptical Aramis—"has he the honour of being known to you?"

"Yes, certainly," replied Chatillon: "he came here this morning with the prince. He is a charming young man! Is he one of your friends, count?"

"Yes, sir," replied Athos, slightly agitated, "so much so, that I greatly wish to see him. Is it possible?"

"Very possible, sir. If you will accompany me, I will conduct you to head-quarters."

"Halloo!" said Aramis, turning round, "there is a great noise behind us, it seems."

"In fact, a body of horsemen are coming towards us," said Chatillon.

"I recognise the coadjutor by his fronde hat."

"And I, M. de Beaufort, by his white plumes."

"They are coming on at a gallop. The prince is with them. Ah! there he leaves them."

"They are beating the recal!" exclaimed Chatillon. "Do you hear? We must gain some information."

In fact, the soldiers were seen running to their arms, the horsemen who had dismounted replaced themselves in their saddles, the

trumpets sounded, and the drums beat. M. de Beaufort drew his sword.

On his side, the prince also gave the signal of recal, and all the officers of the royal army, who had for a short time mingled with the Parisian troops, hastened to him.

"Gentlemen," said Chatillon, "the truce is evidently broken, and they are going to fight. Return to Charenton, for I shall shortly attack it. Observe the signal that the prince gives me."

In fact, a cornet thrice raised the prince's standard in the air.

"To our next meeting, chevalier," exclaimed Chatillon, and he set off at full gallop, to rejoin his escort.

Athos and Aramis, on their part, turned their horses' heads, and went to salute the coadjutor and M. de Beaufort. As for M. de Bouillon, he had such a terrible fit of the gout, towards the end of the conference, that they were obliged to carry him back to Paris in a litter. As some compensation, the Duke d'Elbœuf, surrounded by his four sons, as by his staff, hastily inspected the ranks of the Parisian army.

In the meantime, between Charenton and the royal army, a large open space was formed, which seemed to be prepared to serve as the last receptacle for the dead bodies.

"This Mazarin is really a disgrace to France!" said the coadjutor, tightening his sword-belt, which he wore, after the fashion of the ancient military prelates, over his archiepiscopal simar: "he is a scoundrel, who would manage France like a farm. Therefore France cannot hope for tranquillity and happiness, until he shall have left it."

"It seems that they have not agreed upon the colour of his hat," said Aramis.

At the same moment, M. de Beaufort raised his sword. "Gentlemen," said he, "we have been making fruitless efforts to negotiate. We wished to relieve ourselves of that scoundrel Mazarini; but the queen, who is infatuated by him, is determined to keep him as her minister; so that there remains but one expedient for us, which is, to have a regular fight for it."

"Good!" said the coadjutor. "There is the usual eloquence of M. de Beaufort for you."

"Happily," said Aramis, "he corrects the faults of his language by the point of his sword."

"Fangh!" said the coadjutor, contemptuously, "I can assure you, that he is but a poor thing in this war." And he drew his sword in turn.

"Gentlemen," said he, "the enemy approaches: we shall do well, I think, to spare him half the journey." And, without disturbing himself as to whether he was followed or not, off he went. His regiment, which bore the name of the regiment of Corinth, being the title of his archbishopric, moved timidly after him, and began a confused skirmish.

On his part, M. de Beaufort launched his cavalry, under the command of M. de Noirmoutiers, towards Etampes, where he was to meet a convoy of provisions, anxiously expected by the Parisians. M. de Beaufort prepared to support him.

M. de Chanleu, who commanded the place, kept himself, with the strongest body of his troops, ready to resist the assault, and even, should the enemy be repulsed, to attempt a sortie.

In about half an hour the combat had commenced at every point.

"The coadjutor, whom M. de Beaufort's reputation for courage exasperated, had thrown himself forward, and was performing prodigies of valour. The bent of his inclination was decidedly for the sword, and he was happy whenever he had an opportunity of drawing it from the scabbard, it being quite immaterial for whom or for what he did so. But in the present case, if he did his duty well as a soldier, he performed it badly as a colonel. With seven or eight hundred men, he had attacked three thousand; who, in turn, had come down in one mass with such a shock, that they had driven back the coadjutor's soldiers, still fighting, however, but arriving at the ramparts in complete disorder. The fire of Chanleu's artillery, however, had checked the royal army, which appeared shaken for an instant; but that lasted only a short time, and they reformed behind a knot of houses, and a small wood.

Chanleu, who fancied that the time was now come, pushed forward, a the head of two regiments, to follow the royal army; but, as we have said, it had reformed, and was coming back to the charge, led by M. de Chatillon in person. The charge was so severe, and so skilfully managed, that Chanleu and his men found themselves almost surrounded. Chanleu commanded a retreat, which he began to execute foot by foot, step by step; but unfortunately, in a few moments, Chanleu himself fell, mortally wounded.

M. de Chatillon saw him fall, and announced his death in a loud voice, which redoubled the courage of the royal army, and completely disorganized the two regiments with which Chanleu had made the sortie. In consequence, every one thought of his own safety, and only occupied himself with the care of regaining the ramparts, at the foot of which the coadjutor was endeavouring to rally his shattered regiment.

Suddenly, a squadron of cavalry rushed forward to meet the conquerors, who were coming pell-mell with the fugitives into the entrenchments. Athos and Aramis charged at their head—Aramis with sword and pistol in his hand; Athos, with his sword in the scabbard, and his pistols in their holsters. Athos was as calm and cool as on parade, except that his handsome and noble countenance was saddened, when he saw so many men cutting each other's throats, and sacrificing themselves, on the one side to the obstinacy of the court, and, on the other, to the rancour of the princes. Aramis, on the contrary, revelled in the slaughter, according to his usual habit under similar circumstances. His mouth, so finely marked, was impressed by a deadly smile; his inflated nostrils inhaled the odour of blood; every one of his sword-cuts was given with deadly correctness; and the butt-end of his pistol finished the wounded who endeavoured to rise again.

On the opposite side and in the ranks of the royal army, two horsemen, one covered by a gilded cuirass, the other by a plain buff-coat, from which issued the sleeves of a blue velvet doublet, charged in the front rank. The chevalier in the gilded cuirass rushed against Aramis, at whom he aimed a blow with his sword, which he parried with his usual skill.

"Ah! is it you, M. de Chatillon?" exclaimed the chevalier. "Welcome! I was expecting you."

"I hope that I have not made you wait too long, sir," replied the duke. "At any rate, here I am now."

"M. de Chatillon," said Aramis, drawing from his holster a pistol, which he had reserved for this occasion, "if your pistol be discharged, I think you are a dead man."

"Thank God, it is not, sir," said Chatillon.

And the duke, levelling his pistol at Aramis, took his aim, and fired. But Aramis stooped his head just as he saw the duke apply his finger to the trigger, and the ball passed over his head, without touching him.

"Oh! you have missed me," said Aramis; "but I swear that I will not miss you."

"If I give you time!" cried M. de Chatillon, spurring his horse, and bounding on him, with his sword raised on high.

Aramis waited for him with that terrible smile that was peculiar to himself on such an occasion; and Athos, who saw M. de Chatillon coming against Aramis with the rapidity of lightning, opened his mouth to cry, "Fire! fire, now!" when the shot was fired. M. de Chatillon opened his arms, and fell back on his horse's crupper. The ball had entered his breast by the hollow of the cuirass.

"I am a dead man!" murmured the duke. And he fell from his horse to the earth.

"I told you so, sir, and I am now sorry that I kept my word so well. Can I be of any service to you?"

Chatillon made a sign with his hand, and Aramis was about to dismount, when he suddenly received a violent blow in the side from a sword, but his cuirass parried the blow. He turned quickly, and seized this fresh antagonist by the wrist; when two cries were uttered at the same instant, one by himself, the other by Athos.

"Raoul!"

The young man at the same moment recognised the countenance of the Chevalier d'Herblay, and the voice of his father, and dropped his sword. Many of the Parisian horsemen then rushed on Raoul, but Aramis covered him with his sword.

"My prisoner!" he exclaimed. "Give way!"

Athos then took his son's horse by the bridle, and led him out of the fray.

At this moment, M. le Prince, who supported M. de Chatillon in the second line, appeared in the midst of the skirmish: his eagle eyes were seen to sparkle, and he was recognised by his blows. On perceiving him, the regiment of the Archbishop of Corinth, which the coadjutor had in vain been endeavouring to rally, threw itself into the midst of the Parisian troops, overthrew everything in its way, and fled into Charenton, through which it passed without stopping. The coadjutor, carried away by it, passed near the group formed by Athos, Aramis, and Raoul.

"Ah!" cried Aramis, who, from his jealousy, could not help rejoicing in the check the coadjutor had received—"in your character as an archbishop, your excellence ought to understand the Scriptures."

"And what have the Scriptures to do with what is now taking place?" demanded the coadjutor.

"That the prince treats you to-day, as St. Paul did the first of the Corinthians."

"Come, come!" said Athos, "that is a clever speech; but we must not wait here, bandying compliments. Forward, forward! or, rather, retreat; for the battle has much the appearance of being lost to the frondeurs."

"I do not care a pin for that," replied Aramis. "I only came here to meet M. de Chatillon. I have met him; and I am quite satisfied. A duel with a Chatillon is rather flattering."

"And a prisoner to boot!" said Athos, pointing to Raoul.

The three cavaliers continued their course at a gallop. The young man had experienced a thrill of joy on meeting his father. They galloped side by side, the young man's left hand being in Athos's right.

When they were some distance from the field of battle, "What were you doing so forward in the skirmish, my friend?" said Athos to the young man: "that was not your proper place, I think, not being suitably armed for the combat."

"But then I was not to fight to-day, sir. I had received a commission from the prince to the cardinal, and was just setting off for Rueil, when, seeing M. de Chatillon charge, I was seized with a longing to charge by his side. It was then that he told me that two gentlemen of the Parisian army were looking for me, and he mentioned the Count de la Fère."

"How! You knew that we were there, and yet wished to kill you friend, the chevalier?"

"I did not recognise the chevalier under his armour," said Raoul, colouring; "although I ought to have done so by his address and coolness."

"Thank you for the compliment, my young friend: it is quite evident that you have received good lessons in courtesy. But you were going to Reuil, you said?"

"Yes."

"To the cardinal?"

"Certainly. I am the bearer of a dispatch from the prince to his eminence."

"You must take it there," said Athos.

"Oh! as regards that, one moment, if you please. No false generosity, count. By my faith, our own fate, and, what is more important, the fate of our friends, perhaps depends on that despatch."

"But this young man must not fail in his duty," replied Athos.

"In the first place, you forget, count, that the young man is a prisoner. What we do, therefore, is perfectly fair. Besides, the conquerers must not be too fastidious in their use of means. Give me the despatch, Raoul?"

Raoul hesitated, at the same time regarding Athos, as if to seek for a rule of action from his looks.

"Give up the despatch," said Athos; "you are the chevalier d'Herblay's prisoner."

Raoul yielded with reluctance; but Aramis, less scrupulous than the Count de la Fère, seized the despatch with eagerness, ran it over, and then gave it to Athos.

"You who believe," said he, "read this letter, and, on reflection, you will perceive something in it which Providence deems important for us to know."

Athos took the letter with a frown; but the idea that d'Artagnan had something to do with it, aided in conquering the repugnance he had to read it. The letter was as follows:—

"Your excellence,

"I will this evening send to your eminence the ten men that you demand, to reinforce M. de Comminges' troop. They are good soldiers, fit to restrain the two rough adversaries whose address and resolution your eminence fears."

"Oho!" said Athos.

"Well, now," demanded Aramis, "what do you think of the two adversaries, to guard whom ten good soldiers are necessary, independant of Comminges' troop? Does not this seem like two drops of water to d'Artagnan and Porthos?"

"We will beat up all Paris to-day," said Athos; "and should we gain no intelligence this evening, we will take the road to Picardy; and I will answer for it, thanks to d'Artagnan's imagination, that we shall not be long before we discover some indication that will relieve our doubts."

"Let us then beat up Paris, and inquire especially of Planchet, whether he has not heard something of his old master."

"Ah, poor Planchet! You talk of him much at your ease, Aramis. He has doubtless been massacred. All those warlike citizens must have gone out, and have no doubt been killed."

As this was very probable, it was with some anxiety that the two friends entered Paris by the gate of the temple, and went towards the Place Royale, where they thought they might hear something of these poor citizens. But great was the astonishment of the two friends, on finding them and their captain still encamped on the Place Royale, drinking and joking, whilst they were doubtless lamented by their families, who had heard the report of the cannon at Charenton, and believed them to be in the midst of the battle.

Athos and Aramis made further inquiries of Planchet, but he had heard nothing of d'Artagnan. They wished to take him with

them; but he informed them that he dared not leave his post without superior orders.

At five o'clock these citizens returned to their homes, declaring that they had just come from the contest. They had never lost sight of the bronze horse of Louis XIII.

"A thousand thunders!" said Planchet, on entering his shop in the rue des Lombards, "we have been utterly routed! I shall never console myself for it!"

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE ROAD TO PICARDY.

Athos and Aramis, who were in great security in Paris, did not conceal from themselves that they would scarcely have put their foot beyond it, before they would be in the midst of the greatest dangers. But we know what these men thought of danger. Besides, they perceived that the catastrophe of this second Odyssy was approaching, and that there was only, as may be said, one more effort to be made. Besides, Paris itself was no bed of roses. Provisions began to fail; and, whenever any one of the Prince de Conti's generals wanted to recover his influence, he excited a slight insurrection, which he quelled himself, and which, for the moment, gave him some superiority over his colleagues.

In one of these commotions, M. de Beaufort caused Mazarin's house and library to be pillaged, to give, as he said, the poor people something to gnaw.

Athos and Aramis left Paris just after this stroke of state policy, which took place during the evening of the day when the Parisians were beaten at Charenton. They left Paris in misery, bordering on a famine, agitated by fears, and torn to pieces by factions. Parisians and frondeurs, they expected to find the same misery, the same fears, and the same intrigues in the enemy's camp. Their surprise, therefore, was great, when, on passing through St. Denis,

they learnt that they were laughing, singing, and leading a joyous life at St. Germain.

At first, the two gentlemen took the by-roads, that they might not fall into the hands of the Mazarins, scattered about in the Isle of France; and afterwards to escape the frondeurs, who had possession of Normandy, and who would not have failed to take them to M. de Longueville, that he might determine whether they were friends or foes. Having once got clear of these two dangers, they returned to the road of Boulogne at Abbeville, and followed it step by step.

Nevertheless, they were for some time in a state of great uncertainty. They had already visited two or three hotels; and three or four innkeepers had been questioned, without one single discovery having been made to clear away their doubts, or to guide their researches; when, at Montreuil, Athos felt something rough on the table, and, on removing the cloth, he read these hieroglyphics, deeply cut into the wood with the point of a knife:—

"Port— d'Art— 2d February."

"A miracle!" said Athos, pointing out the inscription to Aramis. "We were going to sleep here, but it is useless. Let us go further."

They again mounted their horses, and reached Abbeville. There they stopped in great perplexity, on account of the vast number of hotels. They could not visit them all; and how could they divine in which those they sought had lodged.

"Believe me, Athos," said Aramis, "we must not think of finding anything at Abbeville. If we are puzzled, our friends would not be less so. Had Porthos been alone, he would have gone to the most splendid hotel; and, by having that pointed out to us, we should be sure of finding some traces of him. But d'Artagnan has no such weakness, and Porthos might in vain protest that he was dying of hunger. He doubtless continued his route, inexorable as fate, and we must look further on."

They therefore proceeded forward, but nothing presented itself to their observation. This was one of the most painful, as well as most tiresome tasks, that Athos and Aramis had ever undertaken; and without the triple influence of honour, gratitude, and friendship engraven on their souls, our two friends would have a thousand

times given up in despair this tracing in the sand, interrogating passengers, studying signs, and examining countenances. In this manner did they go, even to Peronne.

Athos began to despair. His noble and interesting disposition made him reproach himself for the obscurity in which he and Aramis found themselves. They had, no doubt, performed their search unskilfully; they had not been sufficiently explicit in their questions, or persevering enough in their investigations. They were very near retracing their steps, when, on crossing the faubourg that led to the gates of the city, on a white wall that formed the angle of a street turning round the rampart, Athos cast his eyes on a sketch, with a black stone, which represented, with the simplicity of a child's first effort with a pencil, two horsemen galloping violently along: one of them held a piece of paper in his hand, on which was written, in the Spanish language, these words:—

"We are pursued."

"Ah!" said Athos, "this is as clear as the day. Although pursued, d'Artagnan stopped here for five minutes. And it also proves that he was not very closely pursued, and, perhaps, managed to escape."

Aramis shook his head. "Had he escaped," said he, "we should have seen him, or at least we should have heard of him."

"You are right, Aramis; let us proceed."

To paint the anxiety and impatience of the two gentlemen, would be utterly impossible. The anxiety rested on Athos's tender and friendly heart. The impatience belonged to Aramis's nervous and excitable disposition. Therefore, for three or four hours, they galloped on as violently as the two horsemen on the wall. Suddenly, in a narrow gorge, enclosed between two banks, they saw the road partially blocked up by an enormous stone. Its original situation was indicated on the side of one of the banks, and the kind of bed that it had left by its extraction, proved that it had not rolled down without aid; whilst its weight further satisfied them that it must have required the arm of an Enceladus or a Briarœus to move it.

Aramis stopped. "Oh!" said he, looking at the stone, "there is

something in that, that tells either of Ajax, the son of Telamon, or of Porthos. Let us dismount, if you please, count, and examine this rock."

They both dismounted. The stone had evidently been brought there to interrupt the passage of the horsemen. It had, therefore, been at first placed across the road; then the horsemen had found this obstacle, had dismounted, and removed it. The two friends examined the stone on all the sides that were visible; but it offered nothing particular to their observation. They then summoned Blasois and Grimaud, and all four managed to turn over the piece of rock, and on the side that touched the earth, was written—

"Eight light dragoons are following us. Should we reach Compiegne, we shall stop at the *Paon Couronné*: the host is one of our friends."

"Here is something positive," said Athos; "and, in either case, we know what to do. Let us go, then, to the *Paon Couronné*."

"Yes," replied Aramis; "but if we wish to reach it, we must give our horses some rest: they are really almost foundered."

Aramis spoke the truth. They therefore stopped at the first tavern, where they gave each horse a double portion of oats, steeped in wine. They also gave them three hours' rest, and then renewed their journey. The men themselves were worn out with fatigue, but hope sustained them.

Six hours afterwards, they entered Compiegne, and inquired for the *Paon Couronne*. A sign, representing the god Pan, with a crown on his head, was pointed out to them.

The two friends dismounted, without taking any notice of the sign, which, at any other time, Aramis would have criticised. They found a very fine fellow of a host, bald and portly as a Chinese mandarin, whom they asked whether he had not lodged two gentlemen, pursued by some light dragoons. The host, without answering a word, went for the half of the blade of a rapier, which he took out of a trunk.

"Do you know that?" said he.

Athos merely cast a glance at this blade. "It is d'Artagnan's sword," said he.

"The short or the tall man's?" demanded the host.

"The short one," replied Athos.

"I see that you are friends of these gentlemen."

"Well, then, what has happened to them?"

"They came into my courtyard with horses completely foundered, and before they had time to shut the door, eight light dragoons, who were pursuing them, entered after them."

"Eight!" said Aramis. "It astonishes me that d'Artagnan and Porthos, two such valiant men, should allow themselves to be taken by eight men."

"No doubt, sir; and those eight men would not have managed it, if they had not been reinforced by some twenty men from the royal Italian regiment, which is in garrison in this town; so that your two friends, were, in a manner, literally overwhelmed by numbers."

"Arrested?" said Athos. "And is it known why?"

"No, sir; they were taken away immediately, and they had not time to tell me anything. Only, when they were gone, I found this fragment of a sword on the field of battle, whilst I was helping to pick up two dead men, and five or six who were wounded."

"And were they not themselves hurt?" demanded Aramis.

"No, sir, I believe not."

"Come," said Aramis, "that is some comfort, however."

"And do you know whither they were taken?" demanded Athos.

'Towards Louvières."

"Let us leave Blaisois and Grimaud here," said Athos: "to-morrow, they will return to Paris with the horses, and we will take post."

"Yes, let us take the post," said Aramis.

They sent in search of horses, and, in the meantime, the two friends made a hasty dinner. They wished to continue their journey, if they could find any traces at Louvières.

On reaching Louviéres, they found there was no inn in the place. There was a liquor drank there, however, that has retained its

celebrity even to our days, and which was manufactured there at that period.

"Let us dismount here," said Athos. "D'Artagnan will not have lost such an opportunity as this, not only to drink the liquor, but to leave some trace."

They entered, and demanded two glasses of the liquor at the counter, as d'Artagnan and Porthos might have done. The counter on which it was customary to drink, was covered by a plate of tin; and on this plate was written, with the point of a large pin—"Rueil, D."

"They are at Rueil," said Aramis," whose attention this inscription first attracted.

"Let us go to Rueil, then," said Athos.

"It is to cast ourselves into the jaws of the wolf," said Aramis.

"Had I been the friend of Jonas, as I am of d'Artagnan," said Athos, "I would have followed him even into the whale's belly; and you would have done the same thing, Aramis."

"Positively, my dear count, I believe that you make me better than I am. If I were alone, I do not know whether I should go to Rueil, without taking great precautions. But where you go, I will go also."

They took their horses, and set off for Rueil.

Athos, without suspecting it, had given the very best advice to Aramis that could be followed. The parliamentary deputies had just reached Rueil for those famous conferences, which lasted three weeks, and produced that lame and inconclusive peace, at the termination of which M. le Prince was arrested. Rueil was crowded on the part of the Parisians with advocates, presidents, counsellors, and lawyers of every description, and, finally, by the court, with gentlemen, officers, and guards. It was, therefore, very easy, in the midst of such confusion, to remain as unknown as any one might wish to be. Besides, the conferences had produced a truce; and to arrest two gentlemen during a suspension of hostilities, were they even frondeurs of the highest grade, would have been an invasion of the rights of the people.

The two friends, imagining that every one must be occupied by

the thought that tormented themselves, mingled in the groups, in the hope of hearing something said about d'Artagnan and Porthos; but every one was thinking only of the articles, and their amendments. Athos suggested the propriety of going direct to the minister.

"My friend," interposed Aramis, "what you say is all very excellent. But we must be careful: our safety depends upon our obscurity. If we make ourselves known in any way, we shall immediately be sent to join our friends in some deep dungeon, whence Satan himself could not pull us out. Let us therefore endeavour to find them, not by accident, but according to our own mode of proceeding. Arrested at Compiegne, they have been carried to Rueil, as we were certified at Louvières; being conducted to Rueil, they have been examined by the cardinal, who, after this examination, has either kept them near him, or has sent them to St. Germain. As for the Bastile, they are not there; for it is in the hands of the frondeurs, and Broussel's son has the command of it. They are not dead; for the death of d'Artagnan would have caused a great sensation. As for Porthos, I believe him to be as immortal as a god, though much less patient. Let us not despond, then: let us remain at Rueil; for it is my firm conviction that they are at Rueil. But what is the matter with you? You look so pale!"

"It is," said Athos, in a voice that almost trembled, "because I remember that it was at the chateau of Rueil that Richelieu fabricated a horrible dungeon called an *oubliette*!"*

"Oh! do not distress yourself about that," said Aramis. "Richelieu was a gentleman, our equal by birth, our superior by his position. He could, like a king, touch the greatest of us on the head, and, by his touch, make that head shake upon our shoulders. But M. Mazarin is a pitiful fellow, who, at the best, can only take you by the collar like a bailiff. Cheer up, then, my friend, I still

* From *oublier*, to forget. There is no word in the English language that will fully express the meaning of the term *oubliette*. The prisons so named were the deepest dungeons, in which prisoners were confined, and where, forgotten by the world, and also apparently by their gaolers, they were subjected to the most dreadful privations, and, not unfrequently, to all the horrors of a lingering death from starvation.—Tr.

maintain that d'Artagnan and Porthos are at Rueil, living, and living well too."

"Never mind," said Athos; "we must obtain from the coadjutor the privilege of being at the conferences, and thus we can enter Rueil."

"With all those horrible lawyers? Can you think of it, my friend? And can you imagine that there will be the least discussion about the liberty or imprisonment of d'Artagnan and Porthos? No; and I am of opinion that we should seek for some other method."

"Well, then," said Athos, "I return to my first idea: I know no better way than to act candidly and loyally. I will go, not to Mazarin, but to the queen; and I will say to her—'Restore us your two servants, and our two friends!'"

Aramis shook his head. "It is a last resource, of which you will be always at liberty to avail yourself, Athos; but do not use it, I beseech you, until the last extremity. It will always be time to come to that. In the meantime, let us continue our researches."

They therefore continued their search, and made so many inquiries, under a thousand pretexts, each more ingenious than the other, that at length they found a light dragoon, who confessed that he was one of the escort that brought d'Artagnan and Porthos from Compiegne to Rueil. Without the light dragoons, it would not have been known that they had entered Rueil.

Athos was constantly reverting to his idea of seeing the queen.

"To see the queen," said Aramis, "it would first be necessary to see the cardinal. Remember what I say, Athos—that we shall be united to our friends, but not in the manner that we propose. Now I confess that this mode of being united to them, does not much please me. Therefore let us act at liberty, that we may act well and rapidly."

"I will see the queen," replied Athos.

"Well, then, my friend, if you are resolved to do this foolish thing, tell me, I pray you, one day before you make the attempt."

"And why so?"

"Because I will take advantage of it, to go and pay a visit at Paris."

"To whom?"

"Forsooth, I know not: perhaps to Madame de Longueville. She is all-powerful there, and will assist me. Should you be arrested, contrive to let me know by some one; and I will then devise the best expedient I can."

"And why not risk being arrested with me, Aramis?" demanded Athos.

"No, I thank you."

"Being all four arrested, and united, I think that we should run no hazard. At the end of four and twenty hours, we should all be free."

"My dear fellow, since I slew Chatillon, the idol of the ladies at St. Germain, I have too much personal celebrity, not to have a double dread of imprisonment. The queen might be inclined to follow Mazarin's advice on such an occasion, and the counsel he might give, might be to have me tried and condemned."

"But do you think, Aramis, that she loves this Italian so much as they say?"

"She certainly loved an Englishman."

"Ah! my dear fellow, she is a woman."

"No; you are mistaken, Athos: she is a queen!"

"My dear friend, I devote myself, and shall demand an audience of Anne of Austria."

"Adieu, Athos! I am going to levy an army."

"For what?"

"To return and besiege Rueil"

"Where shall we meet again?"

"At the foot of the cardinal's gallows."

And the two friends separated; Aramis to return to Paris, Athos to open for himself a passage to the queen by some preparatory steps.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE GRATITUDE OF ANNE OF AUSTRIA.

Athos found much less difficulty than he anticipated in making his way to Anne of Austria. On the contrary, everything went smoothly from the first, and the audience that he demanded was granted for the following day, at the termination of the levee, to attend which he was entittled by his rank.

A vast crowd filled the apartments at St. Germain: never, either at the Louvre, or at the Palais Royal, had Anne of Austria a greater number of courtiers. They were, however, chiefly composed of the nobles of the second rank; whilst the first gentlemen of France were with M. de Conti, M. de Beaufort, and the coadjutor. Nevertheless, this court was replete with gaiety. It was the peculiar characteristic of this war, that there were more couplets composed than cannon-shots fired. The court made ballads on the Parisians, who, in turn, lampooned the court; and the wounds, although not mortal, were not the less painful, inflicted, as they were, by the shafts of ridicule.

But, in the midst of this general hilarity, and this apparent trifling, a vast solicitude was brooding at the foundation of all their thoughts. Would Mazarin remain minister or not? Or would Mazarin, who came like a cloud, from the south, depart like a cloud, carried away by the wind that had brought him? Every one hoped it, every one desired it—so much so, that the minister felt that all the homage and all the flattery that surrounded him, concaled a mine of hatred, imperfectly disguised by fear and interest. He felt himself ill at ease, not knowing whom to trust, nor on whom to depend.

M. le Prince himself, who was contending for him, never let an opportunity slip to ridicule and humble him; and on two or three occasions, when Mazarin wished to have his own way before the conqueror of Rocroy, he had received from him such a look as made

him understand, that, if he defended him, it was neither from conviction nor enthusasim.

Then the cardinal fell back upon the queen, his sole support. But on two or three occasions, he fancied that he felt even this support tottering beneath his hand.

The hour of audience having arrived, the Count de la Fère was informed that it would take place; but that he must wait a short time, as the queen had to consult with her minister.

This was true. Paris had just sent a fresh deputation, that might endeavour at last to place matters upon a proper footing, and the queen was consulting with Mazarin as to the reception she should give to the deputies. The anxiety was very great amongst the principal persons of the state. Athos, therefore, could not have chosen a worse time to speak of his friends—poor atoms, lost amid this tumultous whirlwind.

But Athos was a most inflexible man, who never hesitated when he had once made a decision, which emanated from his conscience, and was dictated by his duty. He therefore insisted on being presented; saying, that although he was not sent either by M. de Conti, M. de Beaufort, M. de Bouillon, M. d'Elbœuf the coadjutor, Madame de Longueville, M. de Broussel, or by the parliament, but came merely on his own affairs, he had things of not less importance to communicate to her majesty.

The conference being finished, the queen sent for him to her cabinet. Athos was introduced, and gave his name. It was a name that had too often resounded in the queen's ears, and too often vibrated in her heart, for Anne of Austria to forget it. Nevertheless she remained perfectly unmoved, contenting herself with looking at the gentleman with that earnestness which is only permitted to women who are queens, either by virtue of their beauty, or their rank.

"You are come, then, to offer us a service, count, I suppose?" demanded Anne of Austria, after a moment's silence.

"Yes, madame, another service", said Athos, shocked by the queen appearing not to recollect him.

Athos had a great heart, and consequently made but a bad courtier.

Anne frowned. Mazarin, who, was seated at a table, handling papers like a simple secretary of state, raised his head.

"Speak," said the queen.

Mazarin betook himself again to handling his papers.

"Madame," replied Athos, "two of our friends—two of your majesty's most intrepid servants—M. d'Artagnan and M. du Vallon, having been sent to England by the cardinal, have suddenly disappeared, at the very moment that they landed in France, and it is not known what has become of them."

"Well?" said the queen.

"Well, then," continued Athos, "I address myself to your majesty's kindness, to know what has become of these gentlemen, reserving my right, should it be necessary, to appeal to your justice."

"Sir," said Anne of Austria, with that haughtiness which, when used towards some men, became impertinence—"is this, then, the reason that you trouble us in the midst of the great cares that disturb us? An affair of police! Ah, sir, you know well enough, or you ought to know, that we have no longer any police, since we have left Paris."

"I believe," said Athos, bowing with a cold respect, "that your majesty would not have any need to inquire of the police what has become of M. d'Artagnan and M. du Vallon, and that if you would ask M. the Cardinal where these gentlemen are, he could himself answer, without referring to anything else than his memory."

"Well, God forgive me!" said Anne of Austria, with that disdainful motion of the lips peculiar to herself, "I verily believe that you interrogate me yourself."

"Yes, madame; and I have almost the right to do so; for the question is concerning M. d'Artagnan—M. d'Artagnan, do you understand, madame?" said he, in a tone which made the brow of the queen sink under the recollections of the woman.

Mazarin saw that it was time for him to come to the queen's assistance.

"M. le Count," said he, "I wish to tell you one thing, of which her majesty is ignorant; and that is, what has really happened to

these two gentlemen. They have disobeyed orders, and have been arrested."

"I therefore entreat your majesty," said Athos, still unmoved, and without answering Mazarin, "to release M. d'Artagnan and M. du Vallon from their confinement."

"What you ask of me is an affair of discipline, and does not concern me, sir," replied the queen.

"M. d'Artagnan never gave this answer when he engaged in the service of your majesty," said Athos, bowing with dignity. And he made two steps back, to regain the door.

Mazarin stopped him. "You are also just come from England, sir," said he, making a sign to the queen, who turned visibly pale, and was preparing to give some severe order.

"And I assisted at the last moments of king Charles I.," said Athos. "Poor king! only guilty of weakness at most, and whom his subjects punished most severely: for thrones are greatly shaken in these days, and it yields no satisfaction to devoted hearts to serve the interests of princes. This was the second time that M. d'Artagnan had visited England: the first was for the honour of a great queen; the second, to save the life of a great king."

"Sir," said Anne of Austria to Mazarin, in a tone from which all her habit of dissimultation was not able to remove the true expression, "see if you cannot do something for these gentlemen."

"Madame," replied Mazarin, "I will do whatever your majesty pleases."

"Do what the Count de la Fère requests. Is not that your name, sir?"

"I have yet another name, madame. I am called Athos.

"Madame," said Mazarin, with a smile that declared how quick he was in understanding half a word, "you may be assured that your wishes shall be complied with."

"Did you hear, sir?" demanded the queen.

"Yes, madame; and I expected no less from your majesty's justice. Therefore I shall again see my friends, shall I not, madame? That is what I am to understand from your majesty?"

"Yes, sir, you will soon see them again. But, by the way, you are a frondeur, are you not?"

"Madame, I serve the king."

"Yes, in your own manner."

"My manner is that of all true gentlemen, and I know no other," replied Athos, haughtily.

"Go then, sir," said the queen, dismissing Athos by a motion of her hand: "you have obtained what you desired to obtain, and we know what we wished to learn."

Then, when the door was closed behind him, addressing Mazarin: "Cardinal," said she, "have this insolent gentleman arrested before he has left the courtyard."

"I was thinking of it," said Mazarin, "and I am happy to receive an order from your majesty, which I was going to request you to give me. These violent fellows, who bring the traditions of another reign to our times, are very troublesome; and since we have already taken two of the number, let us add the third to them."

Athos had not been entirely the queen's dupe. There had been something in her manner that seemed menacing, even whilst she was promising. But he was not a man to take himself out of the way on a simple suspicion, especially when he had been clearly told that he should soon see his friends. He waited, therefore, in one of the rooms adjoining the cabinet, where he had had his audience, until they should either bring d'Artagnan and Porthos to him, or come to lead him to them.

Whilst thus waiting, he went up to the window, and mechanically looked out into the courtyard. He saw the deputation from Paris just coming in, to arrange the place where the conferences were to be held, and to pay their respects to the queen. There were parliamentary counsellors, presidents, and advocates, amongst whom some men of the sword were almost lost. An imposing escort waited for them outside the iron-grated gates.

Athos was looking earnestly down, for amid the throng he fancied he recognised some one, when he was lightly touched upon the shoulder. He turned round.

"Ah, M. de Comminges!" said he.

"Yes, count, and charged with an order for which I must beg you to excuse me."

"What is it, sir?" demanded Athos.

"Will you deliver me up your sword, count."

Athos smiled, and opening the window: "Aramis!" he cried.

A gentleman turned round: it was the same whom Athos thought he recognised. This gentleman was Aramis: he bowed amicably to the count.

"Aramis," said Athos, "I am now being arrested."

"Very well," replied Aramis, most phlegmatically.

"Sir," said Athos, turning to Comminges, and with great politeness presenting him his sword by the handle, "here is my sword. I will thank you to keep it carefully, that it may be returned to me when I come out of prison. I have a great regard for it: it was given to my grandfather by Francis I. In those days they did not disarm gentlemen: they armed them. Now, where are you going to conduct me?"

"First, to my own apartment," replied Commainges. "The queen will fix the place where you will hereafter reside."

Athos followed Comminges, without adding a single word.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE ROYALTY OF M. DE MAZARIN.

The arrest of Athos did not make the slightest commotion: it caused no scandal, and, in short, was almost unknown. It had not therefore at all shackled the progress of events; and the deputation, sent by the city of Paris, was told, with great solemnity, that it might present itself before the queen.

"The queen received it, mute and haughty as ever. She listened to the grievances and demands of the deputies; but when they had finished their discourse, no one could have said, so indifferent had

remained the countenance of Anne of Austria, whether she had heard them or not.

To make up for this, Mazarin, who was present, heard well enough what the deputies had demanded: it was, purely and simply, his dismissal, in clear and precise terms.

The speeches being concluded, and the queen remaining silent—

"Gentlemen," said Mazarin, "I will unite with you in supplicating the queen to put an end to the miseries of her subjects. I have done all I could to ameliorate them; and yet the public belief, you say, attributes them to me, a poor foreigner, who have not succeeded in pleasing the French. Alas! They have not understood me; and it was natural enough. I succeeded the most eminent man that ever upheld the sceptre of the kings of France. The recollection of M. de Richelieu crushes me to the earth. I should in vain struggle against such recollections, even were I ambitious. But I am not so; and I wish to give a proof of it. I confess myself vanquished. I will do what the people demands. If the Parisians have committed some errors—and who has not done so, gentlemen?—they have been sufficiently punished for it. Enough of blood has flowed — sufficient misery has overwhelmed a city, deprived of its king, and of justice. It is not for me, a private individual, to assume so much importance as to separate a queen from her realm; and since, in the name of the people, you require me to retire, well, then, I will retire."

"Then," said Aramis, in the ear of his neighbour, "peace is made, and the conferences are nugatory. There is nothing more to do than to send M. Mazarin, under a strong guard, to the most remote frontier, and to watch that he does not return by that or any of the others."

"One moment, sir, one moment, if you please?" said the lawyer whom Aramis addressed. "Plague take it! what a rate you are going at! It is quite plain enough that you are a gentleman of the sword. There is the chapter of remunerations and indemnities to be disposed of."

"M. le Chancellor," said the queen, turning toward Seguier, our old accquaintance, "you will open the conferences, which will be

held at Rueil. The cardinal has said things that have greatly agitated me. That is the reason why I do not answer you more fully. As for what he says about remaining or departing, I have too much gratitude not to leave him entire freedom of action. The cardinal will do just what he pleases."

A transient paleness flitted across the intelligent countenance of the minister. He looked anxiously at the queen: her countenance was so impassible that he could not, any more than the others, read what was passing in her heart.

"But," added the queen, "whilst we wait for the decision of M. de Mazarin, let the interests of the king alone be considered, I beseech you."

The deputies bowed, and left the room.

"What!" said the queen, when the last had quitted the chamber, "will you give way to these lawyers and advocates?"

"For your majesty's happiness, madame," replied Mazarin, fixing his piercing eye upon the queen, "there is no sacrifice that I am not prepared to make."

Anne held down her head, and fell into one of those reveries that were habitual to her. The recollection of Athos reverted to her mind. The bold manner of that gentleman—his firm yet dignified language—the phantoms that he had evoked by one word, recalled to her mind all the intoxicating poetry of the past—her youthful beauty, the brilliancy of her amours at twenty years of age, and the rough combats of her supporters—the sanguinary termination of Buckingham's life, the only man she had ever really loved—and the heroism of her obscure defenders, who had saved her from the double hatred of Richelieu and the king.

Mazarin observed her; and now that she thought herself alone, and that she had no longer a crowd of enemies to watch her, he followed the thoughts which reflected themselves on her countenance, as the clouds, in passing over the surface of transparent lakes, reflect, like the thoughts, the aspect of the heavens.

"It will be necessary, therefore," murmured Anne of Austria, "to yield to the storm in order to purchase a peace, and patiently to wait for better times?"

Mazarin smiled bitterly at this proposition, which declared that she had understood the minister's offer as seriously made.

Anne's head was bent down; therefore she did not perceive this smile. But finding that her question received no response, she raised her head. "Well, cardinal, you do not answer. What are you thinking of?"

"I am thinking, madame, that this insolent gentleman, whom we had arreste dby Comminges, made some allusion to M. de Buckingham, whom you allowed to be assassinated—to Madame de Chevreuse, whom, you allowed to be exiled—to M. de Beaufort, whom you imprisoned. But if he alluded to me, he did not know the relation in which I stand to you."

Anne of Austria started, as she always did, when her pride was wounded: she coloured, and, to avoid replying, thrust her sharp nails into her fair hands.

'He is a man of great prudence, of honour, and of talent, without reckoning that he is a man of resolution. You have had some experience of that, have you not, madame? I wish therefore to tell him, and it is a personal favour I thus confer upon him, in what respect he is mistaken concerning me. It is, in truth, that what they propose to me, is almost an abdication and an abdication requires some reflection."

'An abdication!" said Anne; "I thought, sir, that it was only kings who abdicated."

"Well," replied Mazarin, "am I not almost king, and even king of France? Thrown at the foot of a royal bed, I assure you, madame, that my simar as a minister much resembles, at night, the mantle of a king."

This was one of those humiliations that Mazarin frequently compelled the queen to submit to, and which invariably made her bow her head. It was only Elizabeth, and Catharine II., who were at all times queens to their lovers. Anne of Austria therefore regarded, with something like terror, the cardinal's threatening countenance, which, at such moments, was not devoid of dignity.

"Sir," said she, "did I not say, and did not you hear me say to those people, that you would do just what you pleased?"

"In that case," said Mazarin, "I believe that it will please me to remain. It is not only my interest, but I dare to affirm that your own safety depends upon it."

"Remain then, sir; I desire nothing more; but then do not allow me to be insulted."

"You refer to the pretensions of the revolters, and to the tone of their expressions? Patience! They have chosen a field of contest on which I am a more skilful general than themselves—the conferences. We shall beat them, merely by temporising. They are already hungry: it will be much worse in a week."

"Ah, my God! yes, sir, I know that we shall finish in that way. But it is not only to them that I refer: they are not the persons who most hurt my feelings by their speeches."

"Ah! I understand you. You wish to speak of the recollections that these three or four gentlemen perpetually evoke. But we have them in prison, and they are just guilty enough for us to keep them there as long as it suits us. One only is out of our power, and still braves us. But we shall very soon manage to unite him to his companions. We have done more difficult things than that, I think. I have, in the first place, taken the precaution to confine the two who are most intractable at Rueil, near to myself, under my own eyes, and within my own reach. This day, the third shall join them."

"So long as they are prisoners, it will be all very well," said Anne of Austria; "but they will come out some day."

"Yes, should your majesty liberate them."

"Ah!" said Anne of Austria, answering her own thoughts, "now it is that I regret Paris."

"And why so?"

"For the Bastile, sir; it is so strong, and can keep a secret so well."

"Madame, from the conferences we shall have peace; with peace we shall have Paris; with Paris we shall have the Bastile! Our four bravoes will rot there."

Anne of Austria slightly frowned, whilst Mazarin kissed her hand in taking leave of her.

Mazarin left the room, after this action, half humble, half gallant. Anne of Austria followed him with her eye, and, as he disappeared, a disdainful smile might be seen passing across her lips.

"I depised the love of a cardinal," she murmured, "who never said, I *will* do, but, I *have* done. He knew retreats more secure than those of Rueil, more dark and mute than the Bastile itself. Oh, the world degenerates!"

CHAPTER XL.

PRECAUTIONS.

After having left Anne of Austria, Mazarin again took the road to Rueil, where he had a mansion. During these troublous times, Mazarin travelled with a strong escort, and often disguised. The cardinal, as we have before said, was a very handsome man in the dress of a gentleman of the sword. In the court yard of the old chateau he entered a carriage, and gained the Seine at Chatou. M. le Prince had furnished him with fifty light dragoons as an escort; not so much to guard him, as to show the deputies how easily the queen's generals disposed of the troops according to their caprice.

Athos, kept in sight by Comminges, on horseback, and without his sword, followed the cardinal without saying a single word. Grimaud, who had been left at the gate of the chateau by his master, had heard of his arrest when Athos called out to Aramis, and, on a sign from the count, he had gone, without saying a word, to range himself near Aramis, as if nothing had happened. It is true that Grimaud, in the twenty-two years that he had served his master, had seen him extricate himself from so many adventures, that nothing now disturbed his equanimity.

The deputies, immediately after their audience, had again taken the road to Paris; that is to say, they preceded the cardinal by about five hundred paces. Athos, therefore, by looking before him, could see the back of Aramis, whose gilded belt and martial air

attracted his attention amid this throng, quite as much as the hopes of deliverance that he had centered in him, or the attachment that usually results from sincere friendship.

Aramis, on the contrary, did not appear at all to disturb himself as to whether he were followed by Athos or not. Once, it is true, he turned round: it was on reaching the chateau by the river. He supposed that Mazarin might perhaps leave his prisoner there, in the strong little fort that guarded the bridge, where a captain commanded for the queen. But it was not so: Athos passed the fort in the cardinal's train.

Where the road branched off from Paris to Rueil, Aramis again turned round. This time he was not mistaken; the cardinal turned to the right, and Aramis could see the prisoner disappear round the trees. Athos, at the same moment, moved by a similar feeling, also looked back. The two friends exchanged one simple nod, and Aramis put his finger to his hat, as if to salute him. Athos alone understood that his friend made him a signal that he had got an idea.

Ten minutes after, Mazarin, with his suite, entered the court yard of that chateau which the cardinal, his predecessor, had prepared for him at Rueil.

The moment he set his foot on the steps, Comminges went up to him. "Your excellence," said he, "where is it your pleasure that we should lodge M. de la Fère?"

"In the pavilion of the orangery, opposite the pavilion where the troops are quartered. I wish to pay M. de la Fère every respect, as he is the queen's prisoner."

"Your excellence," Comminges ventured to say, "he requests the favour of being conducted to M. d'Artagnan, who occupies, as your eminence commanded, the hunting pavilion, opposite the orangery."

Mazarin reflected a moment.

Comminges saw that he was reasoning with himself. "The guard is very strong," he continued: "forty tried men, proved soldiers, almost all Germans, and, consequently, having no connexion with the frondeurs, and no interest in the fronde.

"If I were to place these three men together, M. de Comminges," said Mazarin, "we ought to double the guard; and we are not sufficiently rich in defenders for such prodigalities."

Comminges smiled. Mazarin saw the smile, and understood it.

"You do not know them, M. de Comminges; but I do; in the first place from themselves, and then by tradition. I ordered them to aid King Charles, and they performed wonderful actions to save him. Fate must have interposed to prevent the dear King Charles from being now safe amongst us."

"But, if they served your eminence so well, why does your eminence now keep them in prison?"

"In prison! And how long has Rueil been a prison?"

"From the time that there have been prisoners in it," replied Comminges.

"These gentlemen are not my prisoners," said Mazarin, with his cunning smile: "they are my guests—guests so precious, that I have had the windows grated, and bolts put on the doors of the apartments they inhabit, so much do I fear that they may be tired of my company. But, however they may, apparently, resemble prisoners, I have the very greatest esteem for them; and to prove it, I wish to pay M. de la Fère a visit, to have a *tête-à-tête* with him. Therefore, that we may not be interrupted in our conversation, you will conduct him, as I have before said, to the pavilion of the orangery: you know that it is my usual promenade. Well, then, whilst taking my promenade, I will go into his room, and we will have some conversation. However hostile he may be to me, as they pretend, I sympathize with him; and should he prove reasonable, perhaps we may come to some agreement."

Comminges bowed, and returned to Athos, who awaited with apparent calmness, but real anxiety, the result of the conference.

"Well?" he demanded of the lieutenant of the guards.

"Sir," said Comminges, "it seems that it is impossible."

"M. de Comminges," said Athos, "I have been a soldier all my life: I know, therefore, what an order is. But, independent of this order, you can render me a great service."

"I wish to do it with all my heart, sir," replied Comminges.

Now that I know who you are, and what services you formerly rendered her majesty—now that I know that you are connected with that young man who so gallantly came to my rescue on the day I arrested that rascal Broussel, I declare myself entirely devoted to you, in everything except my orders."

"Thank you, sir; I require no more, and I will make one request that will not at all compromise you."

"Should it even compromise me a little, sir," replied Comminges, smiling, "yet make it. I do not love M. Mazarini much more than you do. I serve the queen, which naturally leads to my serving the cardinal; but I serve the one with all my heart, and the other against my inclination. Speak then, I pray you. I await your request."

"As there is no impropriety in my knowing that M. d'Artagnan is here," said Athos, "I presume that there can be none in his knowing that I also am here."

"I have received no order on that point, sir."

"Very well; then do me the kindness to present my compliments to him, and to tell him that I am his neighbour. You will also inform him, at the same time, of what you told me just now, that M. Mazarin has placed me in the pavilion of the orangery, in order that he may pay me a visit; and you will further apprise him, that I will take advantage of that honour to obtain some amelioration of our captivity."

"Which cannot last long," added Comminges: "the cardinal told me so himself. There is no prison here."

"But there are *oubliettes*," said Athos, smiling.

"Oh, that is another thing," said Comminges. "Yes, there are traditions on that subject; but a man of low birth, like the cardinal—an Italian, who came to seek his fortune in France, dare not go to such extremities with men of your stamp: it would be an enormity. It was all very well in the times of the other cardinal, who was a man of noble birth. But M. Mazarin!—The *oubliettes* are royal punishments, which such a pitiful fellow as he is must not meddle with. Your arrest is known, and that of your friends will soon be made public, and all the nobility of France will

demand the cause of your disappearance. No, no; do not distress yourself: the *oubliettes* of Rueil have for the last ten years become traditions to frighten children. Remain, therefore, without anxiety in this place. I will inform M. d'Artagnan of your arrival. Who knows but that, in a fortnight, you may render me a similar service?"

"I, sir?"

"Yes, certainly; may I not become a prisoner of the coadjutor's?"

"Believe me, sir," replied Athos, bowing, "that I would, in that case, use every exertion to gratify you."

"Will you do me the honour of supping with me, count?" said Comminges.

"Thank you, sir; but I am of a melancholy temperament, and should make you pass a dull evening. Thank you!"

Comminges then conducted the count to an apartment on the ground floor of a pavillon, which was a part of the orangery, and on a level with it. They reached this orangery by a large court, filled with soldiers and courtiers. This court, which was in the shape of a horseshoe, had in its centre the apartments inhabited by M. Mazarin, and the wings were composed of the pavilion of the orangery, where Athos was, and the hunting pavilion, which d'Artagnan inhabited. Behind these two wings extended the park.

Athos, on entering his apartment, perceived through his window, which was carefully grated, some walls and roofs.

"What building is that?" said he.

"The back part of the hunting pavilion, where your friends are confined," replied Comminges. "Unfortunately, the windows on this side were blocked up in the time of the other cardinal; for more than once have these two buildings served as a prison, and M. Mazarin, in confining you in them, has but restored them to their original purpose. If these windows had not been blocked up you might have had the consolation of conversing with your friends by signs."

"And are you quite sure, M. de Comminges, that the cardinal will do me the honour of visiting me?"

"At least he told me so himself, sir."

Athos sighed, on looking at the grated windows.

"Yes, it is true," said Comminges, "it is almost a prison: nothing is wanting, not even the bars. But what singular idea could have taken possession of your mind—you, who are the flower of the nobility—to go and waste your valour and loyalty amid all those mushrooms of the fronde? Really, count, if I had ever fixed upon any friend who would be found in the royal army, it was you of whom I should have thought. A frondeur! You—the Count de la Fère—of the party of a Broussel, of a Blancmesnil, of a Viole! Fie, then! it would make it credible that madame your mother was some little lawyer's daughter. You a frondeur!"

"Faith, my dear sir," said Athos, "it was necessary to be either for Mazarin, or a frondeur. I made these two words ring in my ear for a long time, and made my decision for the last: it is a French name, at any rate. And, besides, I am a frondeur, not with M. Broussel, M. Blancmesnil, or M. Viole, but with M. de Beaufort, M. de Bouillon, and M. d'Elbœuf—with the princes, and not with the presidents, the counsellors, and the lawyers. And then the pleasant results of serving the cardinal! Look at that wall, without windows, M. de Comminges, and it will tell you some fine things concerning the Mazarin gratitude."

"Yes," replied Comminges, laughing; "and especially if it repeats the maledictions that M. d'Artagnan has been launching at his head for these last eight days."

"Poor d'Artagnan!" said Athos, with that interesting melancholy that constituted one of the features of his character: "a man so brave, so good, and so terrific to those who do not love those whom he loves! You have two rough prisoners there, M. de Comminges; and I pity you if the responsibility of these two indomitable men has been placed upon your shoulders."

"Indomitable!" said Comminges, smiling in turn. "Ah, sir, you wish to frighten me. The first day, M. d'Artagnan endeavoured to provoke all the soldiers and inferior officers, no doubt to get a sword-thrust: that lasted till the next day, and, indeed, the day after; but at length he became calm, and as gentle as a lamb. At

present, he sings Gascon songs, that make us nearly die with laughter."

"And M. du Vallon?" demanded Athos.

"Oh, as to him, it is quite another matter: I confess that he is a terrific gentleman. The first day, he broke all the doors with one blow of his shoulder, and I expected to see him issue forth from Rueil, like Sampson from Gaza. But his humour has followed the same course as that of his companion, M. d'Artagnan; and now, he not only gets reconciled to his captivity, but even jokes about it."

"So much the better," said Athos, "so much the better."

"Did you then expect otherwise?" demanded Comminges, who, by comparing what Mazarin had said of his prisoners, with what the Count de la Fère said of them, began to feel some misgivings.

But Athos was satisfied, on reflection, that this amelioration in the moral conduct of his friends, most assuredly arose from some plan that d'Artagnan had formed. He did not wish, therefore, to injure them by exalting them too highly.

"As for them," said he, "they are hot-headed fellows. One of them is a Gascon, the other a Picard. Both take fire very quickly, but grow cool as speedily. You have had one proof of it; and what you have just told me, confirms my declaration."

As this was also Comminges' own opinion, he retired somewhat more assured; and Athos remained alone in his vast chamber, where, according to the cardinal's orders, he was treated with the consideration due to a gentleman. Moreover, he waited for this famous promised visit of the cardinal, in order to form a more precise idea of his situation.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE MIND AND THE ARM.

Let us now pass from the orangery to the hunting pavilion.

At the bottom of the court, where, through a portico formed of Ionian pillars, the dog-kennels were to be seen, arose a building of

an oblong shape, that appeared to stretch out like an arm, to meet the other arm, the pavilion of the orangery, a semicircle enclosing the court of honour.

It was on the ground floor of this pavilion that Porthos and d'Artagnan were confined, enduring the long and tedious hours of a captivity so uncongenial to both their temperaments.

D'Artagnan was walking up and down like a tiger, with glaring eye, sometimes growling, in an under tone, through the bars of a large window, looking upon the court of the guards. Porthos was ruminating in silence, after an excellent dinner, the remnants of which had just been removed. The one appeared to have lost his reason, and was meditating; the other seemed to meditate profoundly, and was sleeping. But his sleep was a species of nightmare, which was demonstrated by the incoherent and irregular manner in which he was snoring

"There," said d'Artagnan, "the day is closing: it must be about four o'clock. Now we have been almost one hundred and eighty-three hours in this room."

"Hum!" said Porthos, that he might seem to have answered.

"Do you hear, you eternal sleeper?" cried d'Artagnan, irritated that any one could give way to sleep in the day-time, when he had the greatest difficulty in the world to sleep at night.

"What?" said Porthos.

"What I say?"

"What do you say?"

"I say," replied d'Artagnan, "that now we have been almost one hundred and eighty-three hours in this room."

"It is your own fault," replied Porthos.

"How! my fault?"

"Yes; I offered to let you out."

"By unfastening a bar, or breaking open a door?"

"Yes, of course."

"Porthos, such people as we are, do not purely and simply go out."

"Faith!" said Porthos, "as for me, I would go out with that purity and simplicity that you seem too much to despise."

"D'Artagnan shrugged his shoulders. "Besides," said he, "it is not merely to get out of this chamber."

"My dear friend," said Porthos, "you appear to me to be in rather a better humour than yesterday. Explain to me how it is not merely to get out of this room."

"Because, having neither arms nor pass-word, we shall not go fifty steps without running against a sentinel."

"Well," said Porthos, "we shall knock down the sentinel, and shall then have his arms."

"Yes; but before he is altogether and effectually knocked on the head, (for these Swiss die hard—monstrous hard,) he will cry out, or at any rate give a groan, which will bring out the guard. We shall then be tracked, and taken like foxes—we, who are lions—and we shall be thrown into some hole of a dungeon, where we shall not even have the consolation of seeing this frightful gray sky of Rueil, that no more resembles the sky of Tarbes, than the moon is like the sun. If we only had some one outside, some one who could give us instruction upon the moral and physical topography of this chateau—on what Cæsar called the *manners* and *places*; at least so I have been told—Ah, only to think, that, during the twenty years when I had nothing to do, I should never have thought of employing one of those hours in coming and examining Rueil!"

"What does that signify?" said Porthos. "Let us go, nevertheless."

"My dear fellow," said d'Artagnan, "do you know why the master pastry-cooks never work with their own hands?"

"No," replied Porthos, "but I shall be greatly flattered to learn."

"It is because they are afraid of over-baking a tart or spoiling a cream before their apprentices."

"And what then?"

"Why, then they would be laughed at; and it would never do to have the master pastry-cooks laughed at."

"And what, I should like to know, have the master pastry-cooks to do with us?"

"Only this, that in any of our adventures we ought never to receive a check, or to afford any grounds for derision. We failed the

last time in England; we were beaten, and it is a stain upon our reputation."

"By whom were we beaten?" demaded Porthos.

"By Mordaunt."

"Yes, but we drowned M. Mordaunt."

"I know that well enough, and that will re-establish us a little in the eyes of posterity, provided that posterity thinks anything about us. But listen, Porthos: although M. Mordaunt was not to be despised, M. Mazarin appears to me to be powerful in quite another manner, and we shall not drown him so easily. Let us look about us then, and play a cautious game; for," added d'Artagnan, with a sigh, "we two are worth eight, perhaps, but we are not worth the four you know of."

"That is true," said Porthos, with a responsive sigh.

"Well then, Porthos, do as I do: walk up and down here till some intelligence of our friends reaches us, or till some good idea suggests itself; but do not be always sleeping, as you are: there is nothing that deadens the faculties like sleep. As for what awaits us, perhaps it is less serious than we at first imagined. I do not think that M. Mazarin has any idea of cutting off our heads, because he could not well do that without a previous trial; and the trial would make a noise, and this noise would attract the attention of our friends, and then they would not permit M. Mazarin to do what he pleased."

"How well you reason," said Porthos, with great admiration.

"Why yes, not badly," said d'Artagnan. "And then, do you see, if they do not try us, or cut off our heads, they must either keep us here, or send us somewhere else."

"Yes, that is absolutely necessary," said Porthos.

"Well, then, it is impossible that Master Aramis, that acute bloodhound, and Athos, that wise gentleman, should not discover our retreat. Then, sooth, it will be time enough."

"Yes; and the more so, as one is not absolutely badly off here —with one exception, however."

"And what is that?"

"Have you remarked, d'Artagnan, that they have given us fried mutton three days running?"

"No; but should they bring it to table a fourth time, you may depend upon it, that I will complain."

"And, besides, I am sometimes very anxious about my household. It is a long time since I have visited my chateaux."

"Bah! Forget them for a short time. We shall find them again; that is to say, provided M. Mazarin has not razed them to the ground."

"Do you think that he can have been guilty of such tyranny?" demanded Porthos, with some anxiety.

"No; such resolutions were all very well for the other cardinal. This one is too pitiful a fellow to run such hazards."

"You make me more easy, d'Artagnan."

"Well, then, put a good face upon the matter, as I do. Let us joke with our guards; let us interest our soldiers, as we cannot corrupt them; let us cajole them as much as we can, Porthos, when they come under our windows. At present, you have done nothing but hold up your fist at them; and the more respectable your fist is, Porthos, the less attractive it is. Ah! I would give a good deal, only to have five hundred louis!"

"And I also," said Porthos, who did not wish to be behind d'Artagnan in generosity; "I would give—a hundred pistoles."

The two prisoners were in this part of their conversation, when Comminges entered, preceded by a sergeant and two men, who carried the supper on a tray, filled with plates and dishes.

"Good!" exclaimed Porthos. "Mutton again!"

"My dear M. Comminges," said d'Artagnan, "you must know that my friend M. du Vallon is resolved to proceed to the very greatest extremities, if M. Mazarin persists in feeding him on that kind of meat."

"I declare even," said Porthos, "that I will eat of nothing else, if that be not carried away."

"Take away the mutton," said Comminges; "I wish M. du Vallon to sup agreeably, more especially as I have to give him a piece of intelligence which I am sure will improve his appetite."

"Can M. Mazarin have kicked the bucket?" inquired Porthos.

"No; I even regret to inform you, that he is remarkably well."

"So much the worse," growled Porthos.

"And what is this news?" demanded d'Artagnan. "News is such a rare fruit in prison, that I hope you will excuse my impatience, M. Comminges? The more so, as you have told us that the news is good."

"Would you be pleased to hear that the Count de la Fère is in good health?" replied Comminges.

D'Artagnan's eyes opened immeasurably wide. "Should I be pleased!" he exclaimed. "I should be more than pleased—it would make me quite happy."

"Well, then, I am commissioned by him to present you his compliments, and to tell you that he is quite well."

D'Artagnan nearly jumped for joy. One rapid glance at Porthos explained his thoughts. "If Athos knows where we are," said this glance, "if he sends us a message, he will shortly begin to act."

Porthos was not very skilful in understanding glances; but this time, as he had felt the same impression on hearing Athos's name, he did comprehend.

"But," timidly inquired the Gascon, "you say that the Count de la Fère commissioned you to give his compliments to us?"

"Yes, sir."

"You have therefore seen him?"

"Certainly!"

"Where, if it be not impertinent?"

"Very near this place," replied Comminges, smiling.

"Very near this place?" said d'Artagnan, whose eyes sparkled with delight.

"So near, that if the windows towards the orangery were not blocked up, you might see him from where you stand.

"He is roaming about near the chateau," thought d'Artagnan. Then he said aloud, "You met him whilst hunting in the park, perhaps?"

"No, nearer—nearer yet. Observe, behind this wall," said Comminges, striking against the wall.

"Behind this wall! What is there, then, behind this wall? I was brought here during the night: the deuce take me, therefore, if I know where I am!"

"Well," said Comminges, "suppose one thing."

"I will suppose anything you like."

"Suppose that there was a window in this wall."

"Well."

"Well, then, from this window you might see M. de la Fère at his."

"M. de la Fère is therefore lodged at the chateau?"

"Yes."

"In what character?"

"In the same character as yourself."

"Athos is a prisoner?"

"You know very well," said Comminges, smiling, "that there are no prisoners at Rueil, since there is no prison."

"Let us have no play upon words, sir. Has Athos been arrested?"

"Yesterday evening, at St. Germain, on leaving the queen's apartment."

D'Artagnan's arms fell powerless by his sides. It might have been supposed that he was thunderstruck. The paleness flitted like a white cloud over his embrowned countenance, but disappeared almost immediately. "A prisoner!" he repeated.

"A prisoner!" repeated Porthos, equally cast down.

Suddenly d'Artagnan raised his head, and a gleam of light shot from his eyes, imperceptible even to Porthos himself. Then the same depression that had preceded it, followed this fugitive gleam.

"Come, come," said Comminges, who had a real feeling of affection for d'Artagnan, since the signal service that he had rendered him on the day of Broussel's arrest, by rescuing him from the hands of the Parisians: "come, do not despond. I did not expect to bring you melancholy intelligence, whatever it may be. Through the war that is being carried on, we are all uncertain beings. Laugh,

than, at the chance that thus brings you and your friend so near to each other, instead of lamenting it?"

But this encouragement had no effect upon d'Artagnan, who still retained his lugubrious air

"And how does he bear himself?" said Porthos, who, seeing that d'Artagnan allowed the conversation to drop, took advantage of it to slip in a word.

"Very well, indeed," replied Comminges. "At first, like yourselves, he appeared very desponding; but when he learnt that the cardinal meant to pay him a visit this very evening—"

"Ah!" exclaimed d'Artagnan, "the cardinal is going to pay the Count de la Fère a visit?"

"Yes, he sent him word that he would; and the Count de la Fère, when he heard it, charged me to tell you, that he would take advantage of this favour of the cardinal's to plead your cause, and his own."

"Ah, dear count!" said d'Artagnan.

"A fine thing, indeed!" growled out Porthos—"a great favour, by Jove! The Count de la Fère, whose family is connected with the Montmorencies and the Rohans, is certainly equal to M. Mazarin."

"Never mind, my dear du Vallon," said d'Artagnan, in his most innocent manner; "on reflection, it is a great honour to the Count de la Fère, and more especially as it excites great hopes. A visit! In my opinion, the honour is so great for a prisoner, that I think M. Comminges must be mistaken."

"What! I mistaken!"

"It cannot be M. Mazarin who is going to visit M. de la Fère, but M. de la Fère who will be sent for to M. Mazarin."

"No, no," said Comminges, "who persisted in establishing his facts in all their exactitude; "I perfectly understood the cardinal. It is he who is going to visit the Count de la Fère."

D'Artagnan endeavoured to catch a look from Porthos, to discover whether he understood the importance of this visit; but Porthos did not look towards him

"Is it, then, the custom of the cardinal to walk in the orangery?" demanded d'Artagnan.

"He shuts himself up there every evening," said Comminges. "It seems that he there meditates on state affairs."

"Then," said d'Artagnan, "I begin to believe that M. de la Fère will receive a visit from his eminence. But of course he will be attended by some one?"

"Yes, by two soldiers."

"And will he talk of business before two strangers?"

"The soldiers are Swiss, of the little cantons, and only speak German. Besides, in all probability they will wait at the door."

D'Artagnan dug his nails into the palms of his hands, to prevent his countenance from betraying any other expression than he wished.

"M. Mazarin must take care not to enter the Count de la Fère's apartment alone," said d'Artagnan, "for he must be quite furious."

Comminges began to laugh. "Why, really one would imagine you were anthropophagi! M. de la Fère is quite courteous. Besides, he is unarmed; and at the first cry that his eminence uttered, the two soldiers who accompanied him would rush in."

"Two soldiers?" said d'Artagnan, pretending to recollect himself. "Ah, yes; two soldiers: that is the reason, then, why I hear them call two men every evening, and that I sometimes see them walking backwards and forwards, for half an hour, under our window."

"Exactly so: they are waiting for the cardinal, or Bernouin, rather, who comes to call them when the cardinal issues forth."

"Fine men, i'faith!" said d'Artagnan.

"Yes; it is the regiment that was at Lens, and which M. le Prince has given the cardinal to do him honour."

"Ah, sir," said d'Artagnan, as if to sum up this long conversation in one word—"should his eminence be softened, and grant our liberty to M. de la Fère!"

"I hope so, with all my heart," said Comminges.

"Therefore, should he forget to pay this visit, you would see no impropriety in reminding him of it?"

"None whatever; quite the contrary."

"Well, that makes me rather more easy."

This change of the conversation would have appeared a sublime manœuvre to any one who could have read the Gascon's soul.

"Now," said he, "a last favour, my dear M. Comminges, I beseech you?"

"I am entirely at your disposal, sir."

"Shall you see M. de la Fère again?"

"To-morrow morning."

"Will you wish him good morning for us, and ask him to solicit the same favour for me, as he will have received himself?"

"Do you wish the cardinal to come here?"

"No; I know myself better, and am not so presumptuous. If his eminence will only do me the honour to give me an audience, it is all that I require."

"Oh!" murmured Porthos: "I never could have believed it of him! How misfortune debases a man!"

"That shall be done," said Comminges.

"Assure the count, also, that I am very well—that you saw me sad, but resigned."

"You give me great pleasure, sir, in hearing this."

"You will also say the same thing for M. du Vallon."

"For me? No!" roared Porthos, "I am not resigned at all!"

"But you will become resigned, my friend."

"Never!"

"He will become resigned, M. Comminges. I know him better than he knows himself; and I know a thousand good qualities in him, that he does not even suspect that he possesses. Be silent, my dear du Vallon, and resign yourself."

"Adieu, gentlemen," said Comminges. "Good night."

"We will endeavour to pass one," said d'Artagnan.

Comminges bowed, and left the room. D'Artagnan followed him, with his eyes in the same humble position, and with the same expression of resignation in his countenance. But scarcely was the door shut upon the captain of the guards, than, rushing up to Porthos, he hugged him in his arms with an expression of joy that could not be misunderstood.

"Zounds!" cried Porthos, "what is the matter now?"

"The matter is, that we are saved!"

"I do not see the slightest signs of that," replied Porthos; "on the contrary, I see that we are all taken, except Aramis, and that our chances of escape are diminished, since one more has got into M. Mazarin's mouse-trap."

"Not at all, Porthos, my friend. This mouse-trap, which was strong enough for two, will be found too weak for three."

"I do not at all understand you," said Porthos.

"Never mind," said d'Artagnan: "let us place ourselves at table, and recruit our strength: we shall want it to-night."

"What are we going to do to-night?" demanded Porthos, more and more confused.

"We shall probably take a journey."

"But—"

"Let us place ourselves at table, I say, my dear friend. After supper, when my ideas have risen to their most complete apex, I will communicate them to you."

Whatever wish Porthos might have experienced to be made acquainted with d'Artagnan's project, as he knew his friend's manner of acting, he placed himself at table without further ado, and ate with an appetite that did honour to the confidence with which d'Artagnan's imagination had inspired him.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE ARM AND THE MIND.

The supper was a silent, but not a melancholy one; for d'Artagnan's countenance was from time to time illumined by one of those acute smiles that were habitual to him in moments of good-humour. Porthos did not lose one of these smiles, and at each of them uttered some exclamation, which indicated to his friend, that, although he did not understand, he had not lost sight of the idea that was fermenting in his mind.

After supper, d'Artagnan threw himself back in his chair, crossed one leg over the other, and dandled it about, with an air of perfect self-satisfaction. Porthos placed his elbows on the table, rested his chin on both his hands, and looked at d'Artagnan with an air of confidence that gave to the Colossus an admirable expression of most perfect good-humour.

"Well?" said d'Artagnan, after a moment's silence.

"Well?" repeated Porthos.

"You were saying, then, my dear friend——"

"I? I did not say anything."

"Yes, you did: you said that you wished much to leave this place."

"Ah! as for that, it is not the inclination that fails me."

"And you were also saying, that, to get out, it was only necessary to unfasten a bar or a door."

"Yes, I did say so; and I say so again."

"And I replied, that it was a bad method, and that we should not take fifty steps without being caught, and knocked on the head; at least, if we had not clothes to disguise us, and arms with which to defend ourselves."

"It is true; we should want clothes and arms."

"Well then," said d'Artagnan, rising, "we have got them, friend Porthos, and something better into the bargain!"

"Bah!" said Porthos, looking round him.

"Do not look round you; it is perfectly useless: everything will come to you when you want it. At about what hour did we see the Swiss guards walking up and down yesterday?"

"About an hour after the evening had closed in, I think," replied Porthos.

"If, therefore, they come out to-day, as they did yesterday, we shall not have above a quarter of an hour to wait for the pleasure of their appearance."

"About that time, more or less."

"Your arm is still pretty good, is it not, Porthos?"

Porthos unbuttoned his sleeve, drew up his shirt, and looked with

much complacency at his arm, which was as muscular as an ordinary man's thigh.

"Why, yes," said he: "pretty well for that."

"So that, without putting yourself to much inconvenience, you could make a hoop of these tongs, and a screw of this shovel?"

"Certainly," replied Porthos.

"Let us see," said d'Artagnan.

The giant took the two articles referred to, and performed the desired metamorphoses with the greatest facility, and without any apparent effort.

"There!" said he.

"Magnificent!" said d'Artagnan. "Verily, Porthos, you are gifted."

"I have heard," said Porthos, "of a certain Milo of Crotona, who performed some extraordinary actions, such as binding his forehead with a cord, and making it break, killing an ox with a blow of his fist, and carrying it home on his shoulders, or stopping a horse by his hind legs, etc. etc. I made them recount all these acts of prowess to me at Pierrefonds, and I accomplished all that he did, except breaking a cord with the swelling of my temples."

"That is, because your strength does not lie in your head, Porthos."

"No, it is in my arms and my shoulders," responded Porthos, with much simplicity

"Well, then, my friend, go up to that window, and make use of your strength to unfasten a bar. But wait till I extinguish the lamp."

Porthos went up to the window, took hold of a bar with both his hands, clutched it, drew it towards him, and made it bend like a bow; so much so, that the two ends came out of the hollow places in the stone into which they had been cemented for thirty years.

"There, now, my friend, that is what the cardinal could never have done, man of genius as he is."

"Must I take out any more?" demanded Porthos.

"No, that will be sufficient for us: a man can pass through now."

Porthos made the trial, and could get his whole body out. "Yes," said he.

"In fact, it is a mighty pretty opening. Now pass your arm through."

"Through where?"

"Through that opening."

"What for?"

"You will soon know. Meantime, put it through."

Porthos obeyed, docile as a soldier, and passed his arm through the bars.

"Excellent!" said d'Artagnan.

"It appears that all goes well?"

"On wheels, my dear friend."

"Good. What must I do now?"

"Nothing."

"Is it finished then?"

"Not yet."

"I wish to understand, however," said Porthos.

"Listen, then, my dear friend, and in two words you will be quite *au fait*. The door of the guard-room is opening, as you see."

"Yes, I see."

"They are going to send the two soldiers into our court, who are to attend M. Mazarin, who will cross it to go into the orangery."

"There, they are now coming out."

"If they would only shut the guard-room door! Good! they are shutting it."

"And after?"

"Silence! they might hear us."

"I shall know nothing, therefore?"

"Yes; for as you execute, you will understand."

"And yet I should have preferred—"

"You will have the pleasure of a surprise."

"Ah, that is true!" said Porthos.

"Hush!"

Porthos remained mute and motionless.

In fact, the two soldiers came towards the window, rubbing their hands, for it was, as we have said, the month of February, and very cold. At this moment, the door of the guard-room opened, and one of the soldiers was called back. The soldier left his comrade, and re-entered the guard-room.

"Is that all right?" inquired Porthos.

"Better than ever," replied d'Artagnan. "Now, listen. I am going to call that soldier, and to talk with him, as I did with one of his comrades yesterday: do you remember?"

"Yes; only I did not understand one word that he said."

He certainly had rather a peculiar accent. But do not lose one word that I say to you. Everything depends upon the execution, Porthos."

"Good! the execution—that is my strong point.

"I know that well enough, by Jove! Therefore I depend upon you."

"Proceed."

"I am going, therefore, to call this soldier, and to talk with him."

"You have already told me that."

"I shall turn myself to the left, that he may be placed on your right, when he mounts the bench."

"But if he should not mount it?"

"He will mount it; you may depend upon that. Therefore, the moment he mounts the bench, you will thrust forth your formidable arm, and will seize him by the neck. Then, raising him up, as Tobias raised the fish by the gills, you will lug him into our chamber, taking special care to squeeze him hard enough, to prevent his crying out."

"Yes," said Porthos; "but should I strangle him?"

"In the first place," there will be but one Swiss less. But you will not strangle him, I hope: you will then set him gently down here, and we will gag and fasten him; it does not much signify where, but at any rate somewhere. That will, in the first place, procure us one uniform, and one sword."

"Quite wonderful!" said Porthos, looking at his friend with the

most profound admiration. "But," he added, after some consideration, "one uniform and one sword are not enough for two persons."

"Well, now, had he not a comrade?"

"That is true," said Porthos.

"Therefore, when I cough, thrust out your arm: that will be the time."

"Good!"

The two friends each took his appointed position. Placed as he was, Porthos found himself entirely concealed in the angle of the window.

"Good evening, comrade," said d'Artagnan, in his most charming voice, and in his most modulated diapason.

"Goot tay, sère," replied the soldier.

"It is not very warm walking up and down there," said d'Artagnan.

"B-r-r-r-r-r-r-roun," said the soldier.

"And I fancy that a glass of wine would not be disagreeable to you?"

"A class of wein: it foud pe fery velcome."

"The fish is biting!" whispered d'Artagnan to Porthos.

"I understand," said Porthos.

"I have got a bottle here," said d'Artagnan.

"A pottle!"

"Yes."

"A pottle, quite fool."

"Quite so; and it is yours, if you choose to drink it to my health."

"Me vish it vell," said the soldier, drawing near.

"Come then, and take it, my friend," said the Gascon.

"Fery villingly. I pelieve dat dere is a pench."

"Oh, yes; one would think that it was placed there on purpose for you. Get upon it—there, very well; that's it, my friend." And d'Artagnan coughed.

At the same moment Porthos's arm was lowered, his iron hand grasped the soldier's neck as quick as lightning, and as firm as a

pair of pincers, raised him up, at the same time choking him, drew him through the opening at the risk of strangling him in passing, and laid him on the floor; where d'Artagnan, just giving him time to take one breath, gagged him with his scarf, and, the moment he was gagged, set about stripping him, with the skill and rapidity of a man who had learnt his business on the field of battle. Then the soldier, bound and gagged, was carried to the hearth, where the two friends had before extinguished the fire.

"Here, at any rate, is a dress, and one sword," said Porthos.

"I will take them," said d'Artagnan. "If you wish to have another dress and another sword, we must repeat the trick. Attention! I see the other soldier coming out of the guard-room, and in this direction."

"I think," said Porthos, "that it would be imprudent to repeat the same stratagem. I have heard it said that you seldom succeed twice by the same method; and if I fail, all would be lost. I will descend, and, just as he passes me, I will seize him, when he is not at all suspicious, and will hand him to you all ready gagged.

"That will be the best way" said the Gascon."

"Keep yourself ready, then," said Porthos, as he slipped out of the window.

The thing was executed just as Porthos had promised. The giant concealed himself on the path, and, as the soldier passed by, he seized him by the neck, gagged him, pushed him like a mummy through the bars of the window, and got in after him.

They stripped the second prisoner as they had stripped the first. They laid him on the bed, and secured him to it with belts; and as the bed was of massive oak, and the bands were doubled, they were as easy about him as they were about the first.

"There," said d'Artagnan, "all that goes excellently well. Now try on that rogue's dress, Porthos. I doubt whether it will fit you; but should it be too tight, never mind, the belt will do, and more especially the hat with its red plumes."

It happened by chance that the second soldier was a gigantic Swiss; so that, except a few stitches that cracked in the seams, every thing proceeded in the best manner possible. For a short time nothing

was heard but the rustling of the clothes, as Porthos and d'Artagnan hastily dressed themselves.

"It is done," they said at the same time. "As for you, comrades," they added, turning towards the two soldiers, "if you are quiet, you will come to no harm; but if you stir, you are dead men!"

The soldiers remained perfectly quiet. They had comprehended, by Porthos's fist, that the affair was of the most serious description, and that there was not the slightest joke in the matter.

"Now," said d'Artagnan, "you would not be sorry to understand something about it, would you, Porthos."

"Why, yes, it would not be a bad thing."

"Well, then, we get down into the court."

"Yes."

"We take the place of those two jolly fellows there."

"Very well."

"We walk up and down."

"Ah! and a very good thing it will be, as it is not very warm."

"In a short time the valet will call for the guard, as he did yesterday, and the day before."

"And we answer?"

"No, we do not answer; quite the reverse."

"Just as you like. I am not particular about answering."

"Therefore, we do not answer: we only draw our hats over our heads, and escort his eminence."

"Where to?"

"Where he is going—to Athos's apartment. Do you think that he will be very sorry to see us?"

"Oh!" exclaimed Porthos: "oh! I understand now!"

"Wait before you cry out, Porthos; for upon my word you have not got to the end yet," said the Gascon, in his bantering manner.

"What will happen next, then?" said Porthos.

"Follow me," said d'Artagnan. "He who lives will see." And passing through the opening, he glided gently into the court.

Porthos followed him by the same route, although with greater

difficulty, and not quite so fast. They heard the two soldiers shuddering with fear, as they lay bound in the chamber.

D'Artagnan and Porthos had scarcely reached the ground, before a door opened, and the voice of the valet was heard, calling for the guard.

At the same time the door of the guard-room opened, and another voice cried out—"La Bruyère, and du Barthois, march!"

"It seems that my name is la Bruyère," said d'Artagnan.

"And mine Barthois," said Porthos.

'Where are you?" said the valet, whose eyes, dazzled by the light, could not perceive our two heroes in the obscurity.

"Here we are," replied d'Artagnan. Then turning to Porthos: "What do you say to that, M. du Vallon?"

"Faith, provided it lasts, I say that it is very pretty!"

CHAPTER XLIII.

M. DE MAZARIN'S OUBLIETTES.

The two *impromptu* soldiers marched gravely behind the valet-de-chambre, who opened for them the door of a vestibule; then another, which seemed that of a waiting-room; and then, showing them two stools—

"Your order are very simple," said he. "Only allow one person to enter this room—one only, do you understand?—no more: this person you must implicitly obey. As for your return, there can be no mistake: you will wait until you are relieved."

D'Artagnan was perfectly well known to this valet, who was neither more nor less than Bernouin, and who, for the last six or eight months, had ushered him into the cardinal's presence ten or a dozen times. He therefore contented himself with grumbling out *yah*, in a tone the least Gascon, and the most German, that he could possibly manage.

As for Porthos, d'Artagnan had exacted from him a promise that he would not speak under any circumstances. Should he be driven to extremities, he was permitted to bring forth, for all answer, the proverbial and solemn *tarteifle*.

Bernouin left the room, closing the doors.

"Zounds!" said Porthos, on hearing the key grating in the lock, "it seems that here it is the fashion to lock people up. It seems to me that we have only changed our prison; the only difference is, that instead of being prisoners up there, we are prisoners in the orangery. I do not know whether we have gained anything by it."

"Porthos, my friend," whispered d'Artagnan, "do not distrust Providence, and let me meditate and reflect."

"Meditate and reflect, then," said Porthos, annoyed that things turned out in this manner, instead of in some other way.

"We have marched eighty paces," said d'Artagnan, "and we have mounted six steps. Therefore it is here, as my illustrious friend du Vallon has said, that the other pavilion must be, parallel with our own, and which they denominate the pavilion of the orangery. The Count de la Fère, therefore, cannot be far off: only, the doors are closed."

"That is a mighty difficulty!" said Porthos; "and with one blow of the shoulder—"

"For God's sake, Porthos, my friend," said d'Artagnan, "regulate a little your feats of strength, or they will not, on proper occasions, have all the value they deserve. Did you not hear that some one was coming to us here?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, this some one will open the doors for us."

"But, my dear fellow," said Porthos, "if this some one should detect us, and, on detecting us, should set to work calling out, we are lost. For, after all, you do not intend, I imagine, to make me knock this churchman on the head, or strangle him. Those sort of proceedings are all very well against the English and Germans."

"Oh, God preserve me from that, and you also, Porthos!" said d'Artagnan. "The young king would perhaps be grateful to us for it; but the queen would never pardon us; and she is the person

whom we must manage. Besides, it would be unnecessary bloodshed. Oh, never, never! I have got my plan. Let me then act, and we shall have cause to laugh."

"So much the better," said Porthos, "for I have great need of it."

"Hush!" said d'Artagnan; "here comes the some one alluded to."

They heard the sound of a light step in the vestibule. The hinges of the door creaked, and a man appeared, dressed as a cavalier, covered with a brown cloak, a large hat drawn over his eyes, and a lantern in his hand. Porthos drew himself up against the wall; but he could not make himself so invisible, but that the man in the cloak saw him. He held out the lantern to him, and said "Light the lamp on the ceiling."

Then addressing d'Artagnan—"you have received your orders?" said he.

"*Yah*," replied the Gascon, determined to confine himself to that sample of the German language.

"*Tedesco*," said the cavalier. "*Va bene*." And going towards the door opposite that by which he had entered, he opened it, and disappeared behind it, fastening it after him.

"And now," said Porthos, "what shall we do?"

"Now we will make use of your shoulder, should this door be fastened, friend Porthos. Everything has its proper time and season, and everything turns out properly to him who knows how to wait. Let us just barricade the first door in a suitable and convenient manner, and then we will follow the cavalier."

The two friends set to work immediately, and heaped up against the door all the furniture they found in the room, and the obstruction was more complete, as the door opened inwards.

"There!" said d'Artagnan: "now we are sure of not being surprised in the rear, let us go forward."

They went to the door through which Mazarin had disappeared: it was fastened, and d'Artagnan in vain endeavoured to open it.

"Here is an occasion for your shoulder," said d'Artagnan.

"Push, my friend, but gently, without noise. Do not break anything; only separate the divisions a little; that is all."

Porthos applied his robust shoulder to one portion of the folding-door, which gave way so as to enable d'Artagnan to introduce the point of his sword between the bolt and the staple of the lock: the bolt being cut slanting, yielded, and the door opened.

"Did not I tell you, friend Porthos, that all women and doors were to be managed by gentleness?"

"The fact is," said Porthos, "that you are a great moralist."

"Let us enter," said d'Artagnan.

They went in. Behind glass windows, and by the light of the cardinal's lantern, that was placed on the floor in the middle of the gallery, the orange and pomegranate trees of the chateau of Rueil, placed in long rows, formed one grand alley, with a smaller one on each side of it.

"No cardinal," said d'Artagnan, "but only his lamp. Where the deuce is he, then?"

And as he examined one of the smaller aisles, having directed Porthos to examine the other, he perceived, to his left, a box removed from its rank, and, instead of the box, a wide opening. Ten men could scarcely have moved this box; but, by some mechanical process, it turned with the slab on which it rested. D'Artagnan, as we have said, saw an opening in its place, and, in this opening, the steps of a winding staircase. The two men looked at each other with an astounded air.

"If we had only wanted gold," said d'Artagnan, in a very low voice, "we should have gained our object, and been rich for ever."

"How is that?"

"Do you not understand, Porthos, that in all probability there is to be found, at the bottom of this staircase, that famous treasure belonging to the cardinal, of which so much is said; and that we should only have to go down, empty a chest, fasten the cardinal in it with the double lock, and, after replacing this orange tree, go off, taking with us as much gold as we could carry; and that no one in the world could question us as to whence we derived our fortune—not even the cardinal?"

"It would be a fine stroke for clowns," said Porthos, "but unworthy of gentlemen, it appears to me."

"I am of the same opinion," replied d'Artagnan; "therefore I said, 'If we had only wanted gold.' But we want something else."

At the same moment, and whilst d'Artagnan was leaning his head over the cavern to listen, a dry metallic sound, like that of a bag of gold that was moved, struck on his ear. He started. Immediately a door was shut, and the first rays of a light appeared on the stairs. Mazarin had left his lamp in the orangery, to induce a belief that he was walking about; but he had a wax taper, with which to explore his secret and mysterious strong-box.

"Ah!" said he in Italian, whilst he slowly mounted the steps, examining a bag of reals with a round paunch—"ah! there is wherewithal to pay five parliamentary counsellors, and two Parisian generals. And I, also, am a great captain—only I make war in my own fashion."

D'Artagnan and Porthos were ensconced in one of the lateral alleys, each behind an orange box, and heard all this.

Mazarin came within three paces of d'Artagnan, to push back a spring concealed in the wall. The slab turned, and the orange tree, resting on it, returned to its place. Then the cardinal extinguished his taper, put it into his pocket, and then, taking up his lamp again —"Now we will go and see M. de la Fère," said he.

"Good! that is our road," thought d'Artagnan; "we will go together."

They all three set off, Mazarin going down the centre alley, and d'Artagnan and Porthos down the parallel ones. These last, of course, avoided those long luminous lines, traced at every step by the cardinal's lamp, between the orange boxes.

Mazarin reached a second glass door, without perceiving that he was followed, the sound of the steps of his two attendants being deadened by the soft sand. Then he turned to the left, and went down a corridor which Porthos and d'Artagnan had not observed; but at the moment that he opened the door, he stopped to think.

"Ah! *Diavolo!*" said he, "I forgot the caution Comminges gave

me. I must go and place the soldiers at the door, that I may not put myself at the mercy of this devil of a fellow. Come!" and with an impatient gesture he turned round to go back again.

"Do not give yourself the trouble, your excellence," said d'Artagnan, with one foot in advance, his hat in his hand, and a most gracious smile: "we have followed your eminence step by step, and here we are!"

"Yes, here we are!" said Porthos. And he made the same gesture of a most fascinating bow.

Mazarin cast his terrified glances from one to the other, recognised them both, and let the lantern fall with a groan of consternation. D'Artagnan picked it up, and by good luck it was not extinguished by the fall.

"Oh, your excellence, what imprudence!" said d'Artagnan: "it is always a bad thing to run about without a light: your eminence might knock yourself against some box, or fall into some hole."

"M. d'Artagnan!" murmured Mazarin, who could not recover from his astonishment.

"Yes, your excellence, the same; and I have the honour to present to you M. du Vallon, that excellent friend of mine, in whom your eminence had the goodness to take such an interest formerly." And d'Artagnan directed the light of the lamp upon the joyous visage of Porthos, who now began to understand, and felt very proud of his penetration.

"You were going to M. de la Fère's apartment," continued d'Artagnan. "Let us not interrupt your excellence: you will lead the way, and we will follow you."

Mazarin gradually recovered his faculties. "Have you been a long time in the orangery, gentlemen?" said he, in a trembling voice, whilst he thought of the visit that he had just made to his treasure.

Porthos opened his mouth to reply; but d'Artagnan made him a sign, and Porthos became mute, and his mouth gradually closed again.

"We are this moment arrived, your excellence," said d'Artagnan.

Mazarin breathed again. He had no further fears about his treasure: he only feared for himself. A kind of smile passed across his lips. "Come," said he, "you have caught me in a trap, gentlemen, and I confess myself vanquished. You want to reclaim your liberty, do you not? I grant it you."

"Oh, your excellence, you are exceedingly good; but as for our liberty, we have got it already, and we should prefer asking you for something else."

"You have got your liberty!" said Mazarin, quite astounded.

"Certainly; and, on the other hand, it is you, your excellence, who have lost yours. What would you have, your excellence? It is the fortune of war. You must purchase it."

Mazarin shuddered to the very bottom of his heart. His piercing eye was in vain fixed upon the mocking face of the Gascon, and on the imperturbable countenance of Porthos. Both were shrouded in obscurity, and the sybil of Cuma herself could not have read them.

"Purchase my liberty!" repeated Mazarin.

"Yes, your excellence."

"And how much will it cost me, M. d'Artagnan?"

"Forsooth, your excellence, I do not yet know. We will ask the Count de la Fère, if your eminence will allow us. Will your eminence therefore deign to open the door that leads to his apartment, and it will all be settled in ten minutes."

Mazarin started.

"Your excellence," said d'Artagnan, "your eminence perceives how ceremonious we are; but yet we are obliged to tell you that we have no time to lose. Open, therefore, your excellence, if you please; and remember, once for all, that the least movement that you make to fly, or the least cry that you utter with a view to escape, our position being altogether peculiar, you must not be angry should we be driven to extremities."

"Be perfectly easy, gentlemen," replied Mazarin: "I shall make no attempt whatever, I give you my word of honour."

D'Artagnan made Porthos a sign to redouble his vigilance. Then turning towards Mazarin—"Now, your excellence, let us go in, if you please."

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE CONFERENCES.

Mazarin unlocked a double door, on the threshold of which Athos stood, ready to receive his illustrious visitor, according to the information given him by Comminges. On seeing Mazarin, he bowed.

"Your eminence may dispense with your attendants," said he: "the honour I receive is too great to be forgotten by me."

"And that is the reason, my dear count," said d'Artagnan, "that his eminence did not absolutely wish for us. But du Vallon and myself insisted upon it, (although perhaps in a manner not strictly correct,) so great a desire had we to see you."

At that voice, at that tone of raillery, at that well-known gesture which accompanied the tone and voice, Athos started with surprise.

"D'Artagnan! Porthos!" he exclaimed.

"In person, my dear friend."

"In person," repeated Porthos.

"What does all this mean?" demanded the count.

"It means," said Mazarin, endeavouring to smile as he had done before, and biting his lips whilst he smiled—"it means, that our characters are changed, and that, instead of these gentlemen being my prisoners, I am the prisoner of these gentlemen; so much so, that you see me obliged to receive the law, instead of giving it. But, gentlemen, I warn you, that, unless you cut my throat, your victory will be of short duration. I shall have my turn; they will come—"

"Ah! your excellence," said d'Artagnan, "do not threaten: the example is bad. We are so gentle and so affable with your excellence. Come, let us lay aside all ill-humour, let us remove all rancour, and talk calmly and quietly."

"I ask for nothing more, gentlemen," replied Mazarin. "But, at the moment that you are discussing my ransom, I do not wish you

to consider your position as better than it is. In taking me in a snare, you have caught yourselves along with me. How will you get out of this place? Look at the gates—look at the doors; see, or rather guess, the number of sentinels who keep guard behind these gates and doors, the soldiers that actually cumber these courts, and let us come to some agreement. Now, mark: I will show you that I am sincere."

"Good!" thought d'Artagnan. "We must take care: he is going to play us some trick."

"I offered you your liberty," continued the minister: "I offer it you again. Do you wish for it? Before one hour, you will either be discovered and arrested, or obliged to kill me; which would be a horrible crime, and totally unworthy of such trusty gentlemen as you are."

"He is right," thought Athos. And like every act of reasoning that took place in that soul, from which nothing but noble thoughts could emanate, his opinion was reflected from his eyes.

"Therefore," said d'Artagnan, "to temper the hope which Athos's adhesion had given to Mazarin, "let us not resort to violence, except at the last extremity."

"If, on the other hand," continued Mazarin, you allow me to go on accepting your liberty—"

"What," interrupted d'Artagnan, "do you wish us to accept our liberty, since you can retake us, as you say yourself, in five minutes after having given it to us? And," contined d'Artagnan, "I know you well enough, your excellence, to be sure that you will retake us."

"No, by the faith of a cardinal! Do you not believe me?"

"Your excellence, I do not believe cardinals who are not priests."

"Well, then, by my faith as a minister!"

"You are so no longer, your excellence: you are a prisoner."

"Then, by the faith of Mazarin! I am and always shall be Mazarin, I hope."

"Hum!" said d'Artagnan. "I have heard of a certain Ma-

zarin, who had but little respect for his oaths, and I fear that it must have been one of your eminence's ancestors."

"M. d'Artagnan," said Mazarin, "you have a great deal of talent, and I am exceedingly sorry to have embroiled myself with you."

"Your excellence, let us make it up: I wish for nothing better."

"Well, then," said Mazarin, "if I place you in security, in a plain and palpable manner—?"

"Ah! that is another thing," said Porthos.

"Let us see," said Athos and d'Artagnan.

"In the first place, will you accept it?' demanded the cardinal.

"Explain your plan, your excellence, and we will see."

"Remember, that you are shut up—actually caught."

"You know very well, your excellence," said d'Artagnan, "that there is a last resource."

"What is it?"

"To die together.

Mazarin shuddered. "Listen," said he. "At the end of the corridor there is a door, of which I have the key: that door leads into the park. Go with this key. You are quick, vigorous, and armed. After a hundred paces, by turning to the left, you will come upon the park wall; you will climb over it, and, in three steps, you will be in the road and free. And I now know you well enough to be certain, that, should you be attacked, it will be no obstacle in your way."

"Ah, faith! your excellence," said d'Artagnan, "this is something like speaking to the purpose. Where is this key that you would offer us?"

"Here it is."

"But will not your excellence conduct us yourself to that door?"

"Most willingly," replied the minister, "if you wish it to make your minds easy."

Mazarin, who did not expect to get off so cheaply, went towards the corridor, quite radiant with joy, and opened the door. It led into the park, as the three fugitives perceived, by the night air that rushed into the corridor, and blew the snow into their faces.

"Zounds!" said d'Artagnan, "it is a dreadful night, your excellence. We know nothing of the localities, and shall never find our way. Since your eminence has condescended so much as to come thus far, go with us a few steps further, your excellence, and conduct us to the wall."

"So be it," said the cardinal. And making a straight cut, he walked rapidly towards the wall at the foot of which they all four arrived in a very short time.

"Are you satisfied, gentlemen?" demanded Mazarin.

"I should think so, indeed, or we should be very difficult to please. Plague take it! what an honour! three poor gentlemen escorted by a prince of the church!—Ah, by the way, your excellence, you said, just now, that we were brave, active, and armed?"

"Yes."

"You are mistaken: it is only M. du Vallon and myself who are armed; M. the Count is not so; and should we meet any patrol, we ought to be able to defend ourselves."

"It is very true."

"But where shall we find a sword?" demanded Porthos.

"His excellence," said d'Artagnan, "will lend the count his own, which is entirely useless to him."

"Most willingly," said the cardinal: "I shall even entreat the count to keep it as a memorial of me."

"Well indeed; that is gallant, count!" said d'Artagnan.

"Therefore," replied Athos, "I promise his excellence never to part with it."

"Very well," said d'Artagnan; "an exchange of tokens: how truly affecting! Porthos, have you not the tears in your eyes?"

"Yes," replied Porthos; "but I do not know whether it is from that, or whether it is the wind that makes me cry. I fancy it is the wind."

"Now, get up, Athos," said d'Artagnan, "and be quick."

Athos, aided by Porthos, who raised him like a feather, reached the top of the wall.

"Now jump, Athos."

Athos jumped, and disappeared on the other side of the wall.

"Are you landed?" demanded d'Artagnan.

"Yes."

"Without accident?"

"Perfectly safe and sound."

"Porthos, take care of the cardinal, whilst I get up. No, I do not require you; I can ascend very well alone. Keep a good watch over the cardinal; that is all."

"I am keeping a good look-out," said Porthos. "Well, now?—"

"You are right: it is more difficult than I imagined. Lend me your back, but without leaving hold of the cardinal."

"I do not quit my hold of him."

Porthos gave his back to d'Artagnan, who in an instant, thanks to that support, was seated astride on the crown of the wall. Mazarin pretended to laugh.

"Are you there?" demanded Porthos.

"Yes, my friend. And now—"

"What next?"

"Now, hand me up the cardinal, and, at the slightest cry that he utters, choke him."

Mazarin wished to call out; but Porthos squeezed him with both his hands, and raised him within reach of d'Artagnan, who, in his turn, seized him by the collar, and seated him close to himself. Then, in a menacing tone—"Sir," said he, "jump down directly to M. de la Fère, or I will kill you, on the faith of a gentleman!"

"Sir! sir!" exclaimed Mazarin, "you do not keep your promise."

"I? When did I promise you anything, your excellence?"

Mazarin groaned. "You are free through me, sir: your liberty is my ransom."

"Agreed. But the ransom of that enormous treasure buried in

the gallery, to go down to which you must push a spring concealed in the wall, which makes a box turn, by which a staircase is discovered. Say, must we not talk a little about that, your excellence?"

"*Jesous!*" said Mazarin, almost inarticulate, and clasping his hands, "*Jesous mon Diou!* I am a lost man!"

But without being arrested by his lamentations, d'Artagnan took him underneath his arms, and let him gently glide into those of Athos, who had remained motionless at the bottom of the wall.

Then turning towards Porthos—"Take my hand," said d'Artagnan; "I hold fast by the wall."

Porthos made an effort that shook the wall, and reached the summit. "I did not quite understand it all," said he; "but now I do: it is very droll!"

"Do you think so?" said d'Artagnan: "so much the better. But, that it may be droll to the end, let us lose no time." And he jumped off the wall.

Porthos did the same.

"Do you attend on the cardinal," said d'Artagnan; "I must explore the ground."

The Gascon drew his sword, and marched as an advanced guard.

"Your excellence," said he, "which way must we turn to gain the road? Reflect well before you answer; for should your excellence be mistaken, it may produce serious inconvenience, not only to ourselves but to you."

"Go along the wall, sir," replied Mazarin, "and you run no risk of losing yourselves."

The three friends doubled their pace; but in a short time they were compelled to moderate it, as the cardinal, although he did his best, could not keep up with them

Suddenly d'Artagnan ran against something warm, that moved. "Halloo!—a horse!" cried he—"I have just found a horse, gentlemen."

"And I also," said Athos.

"And I too," repeated Porthos, who, faithful to his orders, still held the cardinal by the arm.

"This is what I call a lucky chance, your excellence," said d'Ar-

tagnan, "and just at the very moment, too, that your excellence was complaining of being obliged to go on foot—"

But at the moment that he was uttering these words, the barrel of a pistol was levelled at his breast, and he heard this warning pronounced, with the greatest gravity :—

"Do not touch them !"

"Grimaud !" he exclaimed. "Grimaud ! what are you doing here ! Are you sent from heaven ?"

"No, sir," replied the honest servant, "it was M. Aramis who told me to guard the horses."

"Is Aramis here, then ?"

"Yes, sir, and since yesterday."

"And what are you doing ?"

"We are watching."

"What, is Aramis here ?" repeated Athos.

"At the little door of the chatean ; that was his post."

"You are, therefore, numerous ?"

"There are sixty of us."

"Go and apprise them."

"This instant, sir."

And thinking that no one would perform the commission better than himself, Grimaud set off as hard as he could run ; whilst, overjoyed at being reunited the three friends waited for him. M. Mazarin was the only one in the group who was in a bad humour.

CHAPTER XLV.

WHEREIN IT BEGINS TO BE CREDIBLE, THAT PORTHOS MAY AT LAST BECOME A BARON, AND D'ARTAGNAN A CAPTAIN.

At the expiration of about ten minutes, Aramis arrived, accompanied by Grimaud, and eight or ten gentlemen. He was overwhelmed with delight, and threw himself on the necks of his friends.

"You are free, then, my brothers—free without my assistance? I shall therefore have nothing to do for you, after all my efforts."

"Do not be unhappy about that, my dear friend. What is only deferred, is not lost. If you have not yet been able to act, you will very soon have occasion to do so."

"And yet I had taken my measures well," said Aramis. "I obtained sixty men from the coadjutor: twenty guard the park walls, twenty the road from Rueil to St. Germain, and twenty are scattered about the wood. I have, thanks to these stratagetic measures, intercepted two couriers from Mazarin to the queen."

Mazarin pricked up his ears.

"But," said d'Artagnan, "I hope that you honestly sent them back to the cardinal?"

Ah! yes, indeed! I am likely to pique myself on such delicacies with him! In one of his despatches the cardinal assures the queen that the coffers are empty, and that her majesty has no more money. In the other, he announces that he is going to transport the prisoners to Melun, as Rueil did not appear to him to be sufficiently secure. You understand, my dear friend, that this last letter gave me great hopes. I lay in ambush with my sixty men—I surrounded the chateau—I prepared some led horses, which I put under the care of the intelligent Grimaud, and waited for your coming out. I did not much expect you before to-morrow morning and had no hopes of delivering you without a skirmish. You are free this evening—free without a struggle: so much the better. But how did you manage to escape from that rascal Mazarin? You must have had much to complain of him?"

"Not a great deal," replied d'Artagnan.

"Really!"

"Nay, I will say more—we have even had cause to praise him."

"Impossible!"

"Yes, really and truly: we may thank him for our liberation."

"Thank him?"

"Yes: he made M. Bernouin conduct us into the orangery; then, from thence, we followed him to the Count de la Fère's apartment; then he offered to grant us our liberty, which offer we accepted;

and he even pushed his complaisance and politeness so far as to show us the way, and to conduct us to the park wall, which we had just most happily escaladed, when we met with Grimaud."

"Ah! well now, this will quite reconcile me to him," said Aramis; "and I wish he were here that I might tell him that I did not consider him capable of such a noble action."

"Your excellence," said d'Artagnan, unable to restrain himself any longer, "allow me to introduce you to the Chevalier d'Herblay, who wishes, as you may have heard, to offer his most respectful congratulations to your eminence." And he stepped on one side, thereby displaying the confused cardinal to Aramis's wondering eyes.

"Oho!" he cried—"the cardinal! What a glorious prize! Halloo, halloo, my friends! The horses—the horses!"

Some horsemen rode up.

"By Jove!" said Aramis, "then I shall still have been of some use. Your excellence, deign to receive my most profound homage. I would wager that it is Porthos's St. Christopher who has made this additional stroke! By the way, I forgot—" And he gave an order to a horseman, in a low voice.

"I think it would be prudent to depart," said d'Artagnan.

"Yes, but I expect some one—a friend of Athos's."

"A friend?" said the count.

"And see, there he comes, galloping through the bushes."

"The count! the Count de la Fère!" cried a youthful voice, that made Athos start.

"Raoul! Raoul!" he exclaimed.

And in an instant the young man, forgetting his habitual respect, threw himself on his father's neck.

"Behold, M. Cardinal! would it not have been a pity to separate people who love each other so much as we do? Gentlemen," continued Aramis, addressing the horsemen, who every moment became more numerous—"gentlemen, surround his eminence, to do him honour: he much wishes to favour us with his company, and you will, I hope, be sufficiently grateful for it. Porthos, do not lose sight of his eminence."

And Aramis went up to d'Artagnan and Athos, who were consulting, and joined in the consultation.

"Come," said d'Artagnan, after a conference of a few minutes, "let us proceed."

"And where are we going?" demanded Porthos.

"To your house, my dear friend—to Pierrefonds. Your beautiful chateau is worthy of offering its lordly hospitality to his eminence; and it is, moreover, excellently situated—neither too near Paris, nor too far from it. We can, from thence, easily establish a communication with the capital. Come, your excellence, you will there be entertained like a prince, as you are."

"A fallen prince," said Mazarin, in a most dolorous voice.

"The chance of war, your excellence," replied Athos; "but rest assured that we will not abuse it."

"No; but we will use it," said d'Artagnan.

All the rest of the night the captors rode with the indefatigable activity of other days. Mazarin, gloomy and pensive, allowed himself to be dragged along, in the midst of this career of spectres. By break of day they had gone twelve leagues, in one single stage. The half of the escort were knocked up, and some horses fell.

"The horses of the present day are not worth half as much as those of former times," said Porthos. "Everything degenerates."

"I have sent Grimaud forward to Dammartin," said Aramis. "He is to bring us five fresh horses—one for his eminence, and four for ourselves: it is of the very greatest importance that we should not leave his eminence. The rest of the escort will rejoin us hereafter. When we have once passed St. Denis, we shall have nothing more to fear."

Grimaud brought back five horses. The nobleman to whom he had applied, being one of Porthos's friends, had shown the greatest alacrity, not to sell, as it had been proposed to him, but to make an offer of them. In ten minutes more, the escort halted at Ermenonville; but the four friends rode on with fresh ardour, escorting M. de Mazarin. At mid-day they entered the avenue of Porthos's chateau.

"Ah!" said Mousqueton, who was placed near d'Artagnan, and

who had not uttered a single word throughout the whole journey—"Ah! you will believe what you please, sir, but I protest that this is the first time that I have breathed freely since my departure from Pierrefonds." And he put his horse to a gallop, to announce to the household the arrival of M. du Vallon and his friends.

"We are four," said d'Artagnan to his friends: "we will take it by turns to guard his excellence, and each of us will remain on guard for three hours. Athos shall inspect the chateau, as we must make it impregnable, in case of a siege; Porthos shall look to the victualling of the garrison, and Aramis to the arrival of our troops. Or, in other words, Athos shall be chief engineer, Porthos commissary-general, and Aramis the governor of the place."

In the meantime they installed Mazarin in the best apartment of the chateau.

"Gentlemen," said he, when this installation had been made, "you do not calculate, I presume, on keeping me long here *incognito?*"

"No, your excellence," replied d'Artagnan; "on the contrary, we mean quickly to declare publicly that we have got possession of you."

"Then you will be besieged."

"We expect so."

"And what will you do?"

"We shall defend ourselves. If the late cardinal were alive, he would recount to you a certain history of a bastion called St. Gervais, which we four, with our four lacqueys, and a dozen dead men, held against a whole army."

"Such acts of prowess only take place once, sir; they are never repeated."

"But here we shall have no occasion for being so heroic. To-morrow, the Parisian army will receive information, and on the following day it will be here. The battle, instead of being fought at St. Denis or Charenton, will then be fought near Compiegne, or Villers-Coterets."

"M. le Prince will beat you, as he has always done."

"It is possible, your excellence; but, before the battle, we will

pass your eminence on to another chatean belonging to our friend du Vallon, who has three like this. We do not wish to expose your eminence to the hazards of war."

"Come," said Mazarin, "I perceive that I must capitulate."

"Before the siege?"

"Yes: the conditions will perhaps be more favourable."

"Ah, your excellence! as for the conditions, you will see how reasonable we are."

"Well, let us see then what these conditions are?"

"Repose yourself a little first, your excellence, and we will go and consider about it."

"I have no need of repose, gentlemen. I wish to know whether I am in the hands of friends or enemies."

"Friends, your excellence, friends."

"Well, then, tell me at once what you want, that I may see whether an arrangement be possible between us. Speak, Count de la Fère."

"Your excellence, I have nothing to ask for myself, and I should have too much to demand for France. I therefore waive my own pretensions. Pass on to the Chavalier d'Herblay." And Athos bowed, made a step backwards, and remained leaning against the mantel-piece, as a simple spectator of the conference.

"Speak then, Chevalier d'Herblay," said the cardinal. "What do you desire? No preambles—no ambiguities. Be distinct, brief, and explicit."

"I will play with all my cards on the table."

"Let us see you play, then."

"I have in my pocket the schedule of the conditions demanded by the deputation which came from Paris yesterday, and of which I was a member. Respect, forthwith, the ancient rights: the demands which are contained in this schedule must be granted."

"We had nearly come to an agreement upon them," said Mazarin; "let us, then, pass on to the particular conditions."

"You think, then, that there will be some?" said Aramis, smiling.

"I think that you will not all have the same disinterestedness as

the Count de la Fère," said Mazarin, turning to Athos, and bowing to him.

"Ah, your excellence, you are right," said Aramis; "and I am happy to find that you at last render justice to the count. The Count de la Fère is a superior being, who soars above vulgar desires and human passions: he is an antique and haughty soul. The Count de la Fère is no common man: he stands alone. You are right, your excellence: we are not his equals, and we are the first to agree with you on that point."

"Aramis," said Athos, "are you jeering me?"

"No, my dear count, no; I only say what we think, and what all who know you also think. But you are right; you are not now the subject of discussion, but his excellence, and his unworthy servant, the Chevalier d'Herblay."

"Well, then, sir, what do you wish, independent of those general conditions to which we will return hereafter."

"I wish, your excellence, that Normandy should be given to Madame de Longueville, with entire and full absolution, and five hundred thousand livres. I desire that the king should stand godfather to the son to which she has just given birth; and then, that your excellence, after having assisted at the baptism of the child, should go and pay his respects to our holy father the Pope."

"That is to say, that you wish me to abdicate my functions as a minister—to quit France—in fact, to go into banishment."

"I wish your excellence to become pope on the first vacancy, reserving the power of then demanding a plenary indulgence for myself and my friends."

Mazarin made an indescribable grimace.

"And you, sir?" said he to d'Artagnan.

"I, your excellence? I altogether agree with the Chevalier d'Herblay," said the Gascon, "except on the last article, on which I entirely dissent from him. Far from wishing that your excellence should leave France, I wish you to remain in Paris; far from wishing you to become pope, I wish you to remain prime minister, for your excellence is a great politician. I will even endeavour, as far as depends on my own exertions, that you shall get the better of

the entire fronde; but on condition that you remember a little the king's faithful friends, and that you give the first company in the musketeers to a certain person whom I shall name. And now you, M. du Vallon?"

"Yes, it is your turn, sir," said Mazarin. "Speak."

"As for me," said Porthos, "I should wish that the cardinal, in honour of my house, that has given him an asylum, should erect my estate into a barony, with the promise of an order for one of my friends, on the first promotion that her majesty shall make."

"You know, sir, that, to receive an order, it is necessary to substantiate proofs of nobility."

"That friend shall make them. Besides, should there be any necessity, your excellence could tell him how this formality may be avoided."

Mazarin bit his lips. The blow was direct; and he answered, drily enough—"All this amalgamates badly enough, it appears to me; for, if I satisfy one, I must necessarily displease the other. If I remain at Paris, I cannot go to Rome; if I become pope, I cannot remain minister; if I am not minister, I cannot make d'Artagnan a captain, or M. du Vallon a baron."

"It is true," said Aramis. Therefore, as I am in the minority, I withdraw my proposition as regards the journey to Rome, and the abdication of the ministry."

"I therefore remain minister?" said Mazarin.

"You remain minister—that is understood, your excellence," said d'Artagnan; "France has need of you.

"And I desist from my requisitions, and his eminence shall remain prime minister, and even the favourite of her majesty, if she will grant to me and my friends what we demand for France and for ourselves."

"Occupy yourselves about your own affairs, gentlemen, and leave France to agree with me as she can," said Mazarin.

"No, no!" replied Aramis. "It is absolutely necessary to treat with the fronde; and your eminence must write down, and sign, a treaty in our presence; at the same time engaging, by this treaty, to obtain its ratification by the queen."

"I can only answer for myself," said Mazarin: "I cannot answer for the queen. And should her majesty refuse?"

"Oh," said d'Artagnan, "his eminence knows well enough that her majesty can refuse him nothing."

"Here, your excellence," said Aramis, "is the treaty proposed by the deputation from the frondeurs. Will your eminence please to read and examine it?"

"I know it," said Mazarin.

"Then sign it."

"Reflect, gentlemen, that a signature, given under such circumstances as we are now placed in, might be considered as exacted from me by violence."

"Your excellence will be there to say that it was given voluntarily."

"But, after all, should I refuse?"

"Ah, your excellence," said d'Artagnan, "your eminence could only then blame yourself for the consequences of a refusal."

"Would you dare to lay hands on a cardinal?"

"Your excellence has not hesitated to lay hands on her majesty's musketeers!"

"The queen will avenge me, gentlemen."

"I do not believe she will, although it is probable she may much wish it; but we will go to Paris with your eminence, and the Parisians are the sort of people to defend us."

"How anxious they must now be at Rueil, and at St. Germain!" said Aramis: "they must be inquiring—Where is the cardinal?—What has become of the minister?—Where is the favourite got to? How they must be looking for his excellence in all the holes and corners! What remarks they must be making! And should the fronde only hear of your excellence's disappearance, how it will triumph!"

"It is quite frightful!" murmured Mazarin.

"Sign the treaty, then, your excellence?" said Aramis.

"But if I sign, and the queen should refuse to ratify it?"

"I undertake to go to her majesty," said d'Artagnan, "and to obtain her signature."

"Take care," said Mazarin, "that you do not receive such a reception at St. Germain as you have a right to expect."

"Ah, bah!" said d'Artagnan, "I will manage it so as to be welcome. I know a method."

"What is that?"

"I will carry to her majesty your excellence's letter that announces the complete exhaustion of the finances."

"And then?" said Mazarin, turning pale.

"Then, when her majesty's embarrassment is at its greatest height, I will take her to Rueil, lead her to the orangery, and point out to her a certain spring that moves an orange box—"

"Enough, sir," murmured the cardinal—"enough! Where is the treaty?"

"Here it is," replied Aramis.

"You see that we are generous," said d'Artagnan; "for we might have done many things with such a secret."

"Sign, then," said Aramis, offering him the pen.

Mazarin rose up, and walked up and down for a few moments, more thoughtful than depressed. Then suddenly stopping: "And when I have signed, gentlemen, what is to be my security?"

"My word of honour, sir," replied Athos.

Mazarin started, turned towards the Count de la Fère, examined for one moment that noble and loyal countenance, and taking the pen —"That is quite sufficient for me, count," said he. And he signed.

"And now, M. d'Artagnan," he added, "prepare to depart for St. Germain, to carry a letter from me to the queen."

CHAPTER XLVI.

HOW A THING MAY BE BETTER AND MORE SPEEDILY ACCOMPLISHED, BY THE PEN AND A THREAT, THAN BY THE SWORD AND DEVOTION.

D'Artagnan knew his mythology: he knew that opportunity has but one tuft of hair by which she can be laid hold of, and he was not the man to let her pass by without arresting her by the forelock.

He organized a plan for a prompt and secure journey, by sending forward a relay of horses to Chantilly, so that he might be in Paris in five or six hours. But before he set off, he reflected, that, for a man of talent and experience, it was a singular position to go forward towards an uncertainty, leaving an uncertainty behind him.

"In fact," he said to himself, just before mounting his horse, to depart on this dangerous mission, "Athos is a hero of romance for generosity; Porthos has an excellent dispositon, but is easily influenced; whilst Aramis has an hieroglyphical countenance, that is to say, always illegible. What will these three elements produce, when I am no longer here to unite them? The cardinal's deliverance, perhaps. Now, the cardinal's deliverance would be the ruin of our hopes; and our hopes are, at present, the only recompense of twenty years labours, in comparison with which, the labours of Hercules were the works of mere pigmies.

He therefore went to Aramis. "You are yourself, alone, my dear chevalier," said he to him, "the fronde personified. Distrust Athos, therefore, who will do no man's business, not even his own. But, more than all, distrust Porthos, who considers Athos as a god upon earth, and will aid him to promote Mazarin's escape, provided that Mazarin has only the talent to weep, or to be chivalrous."

Aramis gave one of his acute but resolute smiles. "Do not be at all afraid," said he: "I have my own conditions to rest upon. I am not working for myself, but for others; and it is necessary that my little ambition should blossom, for the benefit of the person to whom it rightfully belongs."

"Good!" thought d'Artagnan. "On this side I am easy enough."

He pressed Aramis's hand, and proceeded to Porthos. "My friend," said he to him, "you have laboured so hard with me to build up our fortune, that, at the moment when we are about to reap the fruits of our labours, it would be perfectly ridiculous to allow yourself to be governed by Aramis, whose cunning you know—a cunning that, between ourselves, is not always exempt from selfishness—or by Athos, a noble and disinterested creature,

but also a man who is somewhat worn out, and who, no longer desiring anything for himself, cannot understand the desires of others. What would you say, should either of our friends propose to you to allow Mazarin to escape?"

"Why I should say, that we have had too much trouble in taking him, to let him go in that manner."

"Bravo, Porthos! And you would be right, my friend; for with him you would lose your barony, which you actually hold within your grasp, without reckoning that, once escaped from this place, Mazarin would have you hanged."

"Do you think so!"

"I am sure of it."

"Then I will kill him, sooner than let him escape."

"And you would be perfectly right. There was no doubt, you must remember, that when we were transacting our own affairs, we were also performing those of the fronde, who, besides, do not understand political questions like ourselves, who are old soldiers."

"Do not be afraid, my dear friend," said Porthos; "I shall see you mount your horse from the window, and I shall follow you with my eyes until you have disappeared. Then I shall return to instal myself near the cardinal, at a glass door looking into his room. From thence I shall see everything, and, at the slightest suspicious action, I exterminate him."

"Bravo!" thought d'Artagnan. "In this quarter I believe that the cardinal will be well guarded."

He pressed the hand of the lord of Pierrefonds, and went in quest of Athos.

"My dear Athos," said he, "I am just going to depart. I have only one thing to say to you. You know Anne of Austria. Mazarin's captivity is the sole guarantee for my life. Should you permit him to escape, I am a dead man."

"Nothing less than such a consideration, my dear d'Artagnan, was necessary to determine me to undertake the office of a gaoler. I give you my word, that you shall find the cardinal where you leave him."

"There is something that gives me greater confidence than all

the royal signatures," thought d'Artagnan. "Now that I have Athos's word, I may depart."

And d'Artagnan set off, quite alone, with no other escort than his own sword, and the simple passport of the cardinal to the queen's presence. In six hours after leaving Pierrefonds, he he was at St. Germain.

Mazarin's disappearance was as yet unknown: Anne of Austria was alone aware of it, and concealed her anxiety, even from her most intimate friends. The two soldiers had been found, gagged and bound, in the apartment of d'Artagnan and Porthos. The use of their limbs and their tongues had been immediately restored to them; but they had no more to tell than what they knew—that is, how they had been harpooned, bound, and stripped. But as to what d'Artagnan and Porthos had done, after they had disappeared by the opening through which the soldiers had entered, they were as ignorant as the other inhabitants of the chateau.

Bernouin alone knew a little more than the others. Bernouin, finding that his master did not return, and hearing it strike twelve o'clock, had taken upon himself to penetrate even into the orangery. The first door, barricaded with the furniture, had at once aroused his suspicions; but in the meantime, he did not wish to impart these suspicions to any one, and had patiently forced his way through the midst of all this confusion. Then he reached the corridor, all the doors of which he found open. It was the same with those of Athos's apartment, and the door of the park. Having reached the latter, it was easy enough to follow the footsteps through the snow, and he saw that these steps terminated at the wall. On the other side he discovered the same tracks, then the impressions produced by the pawings and trampling of horses, and, finally, the vestiges of a complete troop of cavalry, that had gone off in the direction of Enghien. From all this, he had not the slightest doubt that the cardinal had been carried off by the three prisoners, since they had disappeared with him; and he had hastened to St. Germain, to inform the queen of this disappearance.

Anne of Austria had enjoined strict silence, and Bernouin had

scrupulously observed it. She had, however, sent for M. le Prince, to whom she told everything, and he immediaetly sent out five or six hundred horsemen, with orders to scour all the environs, and to bring into St. Germain any suspicious troop of horsemen who might be found going from Rueil, in whatever direction they might be proceeding.

Now, as d'Artagnan, being alone, did not form a troop, and as he did not go from Rueil, but was proceeding to St. Germain, no one took any notice of him, and his journey was not in the slightest degree interrupted. On entering the court of the old chateau, the first person who saw our ambassador was Master Bernouin in person, who, standing on the threshold, was waiting for news of his lost master. On beholding d'Artagnan, who rode into the court of honour, Bernouin rubbed his eyes, and imagined he must be mistaken. But d'Artagnan gave him a little friendly nod, jumped off his horse, threw the bridle over the arm of a lacquey who was passing, and went towards the valet-de-chambre, whom he accosted with a smile on his lips.

"M. d'Artagnan!" he exclaimed, just like a man who has the nightmare, and who speaks in his sleep—"M. d'Artagnan!"

"Himself, M. Bernouin."

"And what are you come here for?"

"To bring you some news of M. de Mazarin, and very recent news too."

"What, then, is become of him?"

"He is as well as either you or I are."

"No misfortune, then, has befallen him?"

"None whatever. He has only been obliged to make an expedition into the Isle of France, and he requested the Count de la Fère, M. du Vallon, and myself, to accompany him. We were too much devoted to him, to refuse such a request. We set off last night; and now here I am—"

"Here you are?"

"His eminence had a message to send to her majesty—something most secret and confidential—a mission that could only be confided to a trustworthy man—so that he despatched me to St. Germain.

Therefore, my dear M. Bernouin, if you wish to do something that would be most agreeable to your master, you will at once inform her majesty of my arrival, and acquaint her with the purport of my journey."

Whether he spoke seriously or was jesting, as it was evident that d'Artagnan was, under the present circumstances, the only man who could relieve Anne of Austria from anxiety, Bernouin did not object to apprise her of this curious embassy; and, as d'Artagnan had foreseen, the queen ordered him to be introduced instantaneously.

D'Artagnan approached the queen with every mark of the most profound respect; and when he was about three steps from her, he presented the letter. It was, as we have said, a mere letter of introduction, and of credence. The queen read it, recognised the cardinal's writing, although it was somewhat shaky, and, as this letter told her nothing that had transpired, she demanded the particulars.

D'Artagnan recounted everything, with that air of innocent simplicity which he knew so well how to assume under certain circumstances.

The queen, as he proceeded, regarded him with progressive astonishment. She could not comprehend how any man would dare to conceive such an enterprise, much less that he would have the audacity to recount it to her, whose interest, if not her positive duty, it was to punish it.

"What, sir!" when d'Artagnan had terminated his recital, exclaimed the queen, colouring with indignation—"you dare to avow your crime—to recount your treason!"

"Pardon me, madame; but it appears to me that I have either explained myself imperfectly, or your majesty has misunderstood me. There is neither crime nor treason in all this. M. Mazarin kept us in prison (M. du Vallon and myself) because we could not believe that he had sent us to England quietly to see them cut off the head of Charles I., the brother-in-law of the late king, your husband, and the husband of Madame Henrietta, your sister and guest; and because we did all we could to save the life of the roya

martyr. We were therefore convinced that there must be some mistake, of which were the victims, and that an explanation was necessary between ourselves and his eminence. Now, that an explanation may be productive of benefit, it is necessary that it should be made quietly, far from disturbance and interruption. We therefore conducted his eminence to our friend's chateau, and there we did come to an explanation. Well, madame, what we had imagined, proved to be really the case: there had been a mistake. M. Mazarin thought that we had served M. Cromwell, instead of Charles I., which would have been a disgrace that might have redounded from us to him, and from him to your majesty—a base cowardly act, that would have tainted to its root the royalty of your illustrious son. Now, we gave him proofs to the contrary; and these we are also ready to give to your majesty herself, by calling upon the august widow, who now weeps in the Louvre, where she is lodged by your royal munificence. These proofs have so completely satisfied his eminence, that, as a token of his satisfaction, he has sent me, as your majesty may perceive, to converse with your majesty about the reparations naturally due to gentlemen who have not been properly appreciated, but have, instead, been wrongfully persecuted."

"I hear, and I admire you, sir," said Anne of Austria; "for in truth, I have rarely seen such an excess of impudence."

"Why," said d'Artagnan, "here is your majesty also, who now in turn misunderstands our intentions, as M. de Mazarin did previously."

"You are yourself mistaken, sir," replied the queen; "and I misunderstand so little, that in ten minutes you will be arrested, and in an hour I shall set off to deliver my minister, at the head of my army."

"I am quite sure that your majesty will not commit such an act of imprudence," said d'Artagnan. "In the first place, because it would be perfectly useless, and would produce the most serious consequences. Before he could be delivered, the cardinal would be dead; and his eminence is so convinced of the truth of what I say, that he has entreated me, should I find that your majesty entertained

such intentions, to do all I can to induce you to change your resolution."

"Well, then, I will content myself with having you arrested."

"That would be equally imprudent, madame; for the contingency of my arrest is as well provided for, as the cardinal's deliverance. If I am not returned by a certain hour to-morrow, on the following day the cardinal will be conducted to Paris."

"It is quite evident, sir, that you are but little acquainted with the progress of events; otherwise you would have known, that since we left Paris, the cardinal has been there five or six times; and that he there saw M. de Beaufort, M. de Bouillon, M. the Coadjutor, and M. d'Elbœuf, not one of whom had any idea of arresting him."

"Pardon me, madame. I know all this. Therefore—seeing that these gentlemen are making war for their own interested purposes, and that, by granting their several demands, the cardinal would get off cheaply—it is not to M. de Beaufort or to M. de Bouillon, to the coadjutor, or to M. d'Elbœuf, that our friends will conduct his eminence; but to the parliament, which might possibly be bought in detail, but which M. Mazarin himself is not rich enough to buy in a mass."

"I verily believe," said Anne of Austria, regarding him with a look, which, disdainful in a woman, became terrible in a queen—"I verily believe that you are menacing the mother of your king!"

"Madame," replied d'Artagnan, "I menace, because I am forced to do so. I exalt myself, because I am compelled to place myself on a level with events and persons. But at least believe one thing, madame—as true as there is a heart that beats for you in this bosom—believe that you have been the constant idol of our lives, which, as you well know, we have risked twenty times for your majesty. Will not your majesty, then, have pity on your servants, who, for twenty years, have vegetated in the shade, without permitting the sacred and solemn secrets that they shared with you, to escape even in one single sigh? Look at me—at me, who am now addressing you, madame—me, whom you accuse of elevating his voice, and of assuming a menacing tone. What am I? A poor officer—without fortune, without shelter, without any futurity, if

the countenance of my queen, which I have for a long time sought, be not for a moment turned towards me. Look at the Count de la Fère—a pattern of the noblesse: the flower of chivalry: he has espoused the party opposed to his queen, or, rather, to her minister, and he has no demands to make, I believe. And, lastly, look at M. du Vallon—that faithful heart, that arm of iron: he has been waiting for twenty years, for one word from your majesty's lips, that he may be made, by his coat of arms, what he is by his sentiments and his valour. In fine, regard your people, who are certainly something to a queen—your people, who love you, and yet suffer; whom you love, and who are yet starving; who ask nothing more than to bless you, and whom nevertheless you— No, I am wrong: your people will never curse you, madame. Well, then, say one word, and all is finished. Peace succeeds to war, joy to tears, and happiness to misery."

Anne of Austria looked with a species of astonishment at d'Artagnan's martial countenance, on which a singular expression of emotion might be traced.

"And why did you not say all this before you proceeded to action?" she replied.

"Because, madame, it was necessary to prove one thing to your majesty, which she seemed to doubt—that we have yet some valour left, and that it is only reasonable that we should be in some measure appreciated."

"And from what I see, this valour would not recoil at any thing?" said Anne of Austria.

"It has recoiled at nothing in the past," replied d'Artagnan: "why then should it do otherwise in the future?"

"And this valour, in case of refusal, and consequently, in the event of a struggle, would even go so far as to carry me off, my own self, from the midst of my court, to deliver me up to the fronde, as you wish to deliver up my minister?"

"We have never dreamt of such a thing, madame," replied d'Artagnan, with that species of Gascon romance, which, with him, was merely *naïveté*; "but if we four had formed the resolution, we most certainly should have executed it."

"I ought to know it," murmured Anne of Austria: "they are invincible men."

"Alas, madame!" said d'Artagnan, "this proves that we are only now, for the first time, justly appreciated by your majesty."

"Well, then," said the queen, "but this opinion—should I have it at last?"

"Your majesty will do us justice; and, in doing us justice, you will no longer treat us as men of the common stamp, but will recognise in me an ambassador worthy of the great interests I am charged to discuss with you."

"Where is the treaty?"

"Here it is."

Anne of Austria cast her eyes over the treaty, which d'Artagnan presented to her.

"I only see here," said she, "general conditions. The interests of M. de Conti, of M. de Bouillon, of M. de Beaufort, of M. d'Elbœuf, and of the coadjutor, are here respectively determined. But what of yours?"

"We do ourselves the justice, madame, of placing ourselves on our proper level. We thought that our names were not worthy of figuring near those of such lofty personages."

"But you have not, I presume, renounced the right of personally explaining your pretensions to me?"

"Madame, you are a great and powerful queen, and it would be unworthy of your rank and power, not to recompense worthily the brave men who should bring his eminence back to St. Germain."

"It is my intention," said the queeen. "Therefore proceed."

"He who has negotiated this affair—(pardon me for commencing with myself, but it is neccessary that I should vest myself with the importance, not that I have assumed, but which has been given me,) —he who has negotiated the affair of the cardinal's ransom, ought, it appears to me—in order that the recompense may not be unworthy of your majesty—he ought to be made the commander of the guards, something like the colonel of the musketeers."

"It is the place of M. de Treville that you demand of me!"

"The place is vacant, madame. It is now a year since M. de Treville vacated it, and it has not yet been filled up."

"But it is one of the principal military offices of the king's household."

"M. de Treville was a simple Gascon volunteer like myself, madame, and he held this appointment twenty years."

"You have an answer for everything, sir," said Anne of Austria. And she took a commission from a desk, which she filled up, and signed.

"Assuredly, madame," said d'Artagnan, taking the commission, and bowing, "this is a splendid and noble recompense; but the affairs of this world are full of instability, and a man who should fall into disgrace with your majesty, might lose this office to-morrow."

"What, then, do you wish more?" said the queen, colouring, on finding that she was encountered by an intellect as acute as her own.

"A hundred thousand livres for this poor captain of musketeers, payable on the day when his services shall be no longer agreeable to your majesty,"

The queen hesitated.

"And only to think," continued d'Artagnan, "that the Parisians offered the other day, by an act of parliament, six hundred thousand livres to any one who should deliver the cardinal to them, dead or alive—if alive, to hang him; if dead, to drag him to the shambles."

"Come," said Anne of Austria, "that is reasonable enough, since you ask from a queen only one sixth of what the parliament offered." And she signed a promise for a hundred thousand livres.

"And what next?" said she.

"Madame, my friend du Vallon is rich, and, consequently, has nothing to desire on the score of fortune. But I believe that there has been a question between him and M. de Mazarin, as to erecting his estate into a barony. It is, indeed, if I remember right, a promise."

"A low person," said Anne of Austria. "Everybody will laugh."

"So be it," said d'Artagnan. "But of one thing I am certain, that they who laugh before him, will not laugh twice."

"Well, then, agreed as to the barony," said Anne of Austria. And she signed it.

"Now there is the Chevalier, or the Abbé d'Herblay, whichever your majesty pleases."

"Does he wish to be a bishop?"

"No, madame; he desires a much easier thing."

"And what is that?"

"It is that his majesty the king would deign to stand godfather to the son of Madame de Longueville."

The queen smiled.

"M. de Longueville is of royal extraction, madame," said d'Artagnan.

"Yes," said the queen, "but his son?"

"His son, madame, ought to be so, since the husband of his mother is."

"And has your friend nothing more to ask for Madame de Longueville?"

"No, madame; for he presumes that his majesty the king, deigning to be godfather to her child, cannot make an offering of less than five hundred thousand livres, as a churching present to the mother, at the same time reserving the government of Normandy for the father."

"As for the government of Normandy, I think I may become responsible for it," said the queen; "but as for the five hundred thousand livres, the cardinal is incessantly repeating that there is no more money in the state coffers."

"We will look for it together, madame, if your majesty will allow it, and we will manage to find it."

"And then?"

"Then, madame?"

"Yes."

"That is all."

"Have you not, then, a fourth companion?"

"Yes, madame—the Count de la Fère."

"What does he demand?"

"He demands nothing."

"Nothing?"

"No."

"Is there a man in the world, who, having the power of asking, yet asks for nothing?"

"There is the Count de la Fère, madame. But the Count de la Fère is not a man."

"What is he then?"

"The Count de la Fère is a demi-god."

"Has he not a son, a relation, a nephew, a young man of whom Comminges has spoken as a brave youth, and who brought the colours from Lens, with M. de Chatillon?"

"He has, as your majesty has said, a ward, who is called the Viscount de Bragelonne."

"If a regiment were given to this young man, what would his guardian say?"

"Perhaps he might accept it."

"Perhaps?"

"Yes, if your majesty were to request him to accept it."

"You have spoken truly, sir; he is an extraordinary man. Well, then, we will think about it, and perhaps we may entreat him. Are you satisfied, sir?"

"Yes, your majesty. But there is one thing which the queen has not signed."

"What is that?"

"It is the most important thing of all."

"The consent to the treaty?"

"Yes."

"And of what consequence is it? I can sign the treaty to-morrow."

"There is one thing that I can positively assure your majesty," replied d'Artagnan, "which is, that if your majesty does not sign this treaty to-day, it will be too late to do it to-morrow. I therefore entreat you to place your signature at the bottom of this form, which, as you may see, is written entirely by M. de Mazarin:—

"I consent to ratify the treaty proposed by the Parisians."

The queen was caught, and could not draw back; she signed the treaty. But no sooner had she done so, than her pride burst forth like a tempest, and she began to weep.

D'Artagnan started on seeing these tears. In those days, queens wept like other women. The Gascon shook his head. These royal tears seemed to scorch his very heart.

"Madame," said he, kneeling, "look at the unhappy gentleman now at your feet. He begs you to believe that, for him, a simple gesture from your majesty will be all-sufficient. He has confidence in himself—he has confidence in his friends; he wishes also to have confidence in his queen; and to prove that he has no distrust—that he speculates on nothing—he will bring M. de Mazarin back to you without any conditions whatever. See, madame, here are your majesty's sacred signatures. If you think that you ought to return them to me, you will do so. But from this moment they bind you to nothing."

And d'Artagnan, still on his knees, with a look resplendent with pride and manly intrepidity, gave back to Anne of Austria the whole of those papers, which he had, as it were, torn from her, one by one, with so much difficulty.

There are moments—for if all is not good, all is not evil in this world—there are moments, when a generous feeling germinates in the most arid and coldest hearts, bedewed by the tears of extreme emotion, which the frigid calculations of pride would stifle, did not another heart seize upon it at its birth. This was one of those moments with Anne of Austria. D'Artagnan, by yielding to his own emotion, in harmony with that of the queen, had accomplished the work of a profound diplomatist. He was therefore instantly rewarded for his address, or his disinterestedness, according as we give credit to his talent or his heart for having prompted this proceeding.

"You were right, sir," said Anne: "I did misconceive you. Here are the acts signed, which I give you of my own free will. Go, and bring the cardinal back as soon as you can."

"Madame," said d'Artagnan, "twenty years ago—for my memory

is good—I had the honour, behind the tapestry of the hotel de Ville, to kiss one of those beautiful hands."

"There is the other," said the queen; "and that the left hand may not be less liberal than the right, (drawing from her finger a diamond, much resembling the first,) take this ring, and keep it for my sake."

"Madame," said d'Artagnan, rising, "I have only one more wish, which is, that the first thing you would demand of me should be my life." And, with that air which he alone possessed, he left the room.

"I have indeed misunderstood these men," said Anne of Austria, looking at d'Artagnan's retreating figure; "and now it is too late to make any use of them: in one year the king will attain his majority."

Fifteen hours afterwards, d'Artagnan and Porthos brought Mazarin to the queen, and received, the one the captaincy of the musketeers, the other, his diploma of baron.

"Well, are you satisfied?" demanded the queen.

D'Artagnan bowed; Porthos turned, and twisted his diploma between his fingers, at the same time looking at Mazarin.

"What is the matter now?" demanded the minister.

"Why, your excellence, that there was some question about a promise of a chevalier of the order on the first promotion."

"But," said Mazarin, "you know that no one can be a chevalier of the order, without establishing proofs of his nobility."

"Oh," said Porthos, "it is not for myself, your excellence, that I have demanded the blue riband."

"For whom, then?" demanded Mazarin.

"For my friend, the Count de la Fère."

"Ah, for him!" said the queen, "that is quite another thing: the proofs are established."

"And he will have it?"

"He has got it."

The same day the treaty of Paris was signed; and it was every where proclaimed that the cardinal had shut himself up for three

days, in order to work at it with greater care. We shall now see what each gained by this treaty.

M. de Conti had Damvilliers, and having established his proofs as a general, obtained permission to remain a military man, and not to become a cardinal. Moreover, some words had been dropped about a marriage with Mazarin's niece; and these words had been favourably received by the prince, it being, in his opinion, of little consequence to whom he was married, provided that he was married.

The Duke de Beaufort returned to the court, with all the reparations due for the injuries he had received, and with all the honours to which his rank entitled him. He further obtained the unconditional pardon of all who had assisted him in his escape, the reversion of the admiralty, now held by the Duke de Vendôme, his father, and an indemnity for his houses and chateaux, which the parliament of Brittany had caused to be demolished.

The Duke de Bouillon received domains equal in value to his principality of Sedan, with indemnity for the eight years that he had not enjoyed that principality, and the title of prince, granted to himself and his family.

The Duke de Longueville had the government of Pont-de-l'Arche, five hundred thousand livres for his wife, and the honour of seeing his son held at the baptismal font by the young king, and the young Henrietta of England.

Aramis stipulated that Bazin should officiate at this solemnity, and that Planchet should supply the sugar-plums.

The Duke d'Elbœuf obtained the payment of certain sums due to his wife, a hundred thousand livres for his eldest son, and twenty-five thousand for each of the other three.

The coadjutor was the only person who obtained nothing. They promised him, it is true, to negotiate the affair of his hat with the pope; but he well knew what confidence he could repose in such promises, coming from the queen and the cardinal. Quite different from M. de Conti, not being able to become a cardinal, he was obliged to remain a military man.

Therefore, when all Paris was rejoicing at the prospect of the king's return, which was fixed for the next day, Gondi alone,

the midst of the general gaiety, was in such extreme bad humour, that he immediately sent for two men whom he was in the habit of summoning when he was in that state of mind. One of these two men was the Count de Rochefort; the other, the mendicant of St. Eustache. They came with their usual punctuality, and the coadjutor passed a great portion of the night with them.

CHAPTER XLVII.

WHERE IT IS PROVED, THAT SOMETIMES IT IS MORE DIFFICULT FOR KINGS TO RE-ENTER THE CAPITAL OF THEIR REALM, THAN TO LEAVE IT.

Whilst d'Artagnan and Porthos were gone to conduct the cardinal to St. Germain, Athos and Aramis, who had left them at St. Denis, had re-entered Paris. Each of them had his visit to pay.

Scarcely had he taken off his boots, before Aramis hastened to the hotel de Ville, where Madame de Longueville then was. At the first intelligence of the peace, the beautiful duchess uttered violent exclamations. The war had made her a queen; the peace would lead to her abdication. She declared that she would never consent, and that she wished the war to be eternal.

But when Aramis had placed this peace, with all its advantages, in its proper light—when he had shown her the viceroyalty of Pont-de-l'Arche; that is to say, of all Normandy, in lieu of the precarious and contested royalty of Paris—when he had sounded the five hundred promised livres in her ears—when he had set before her eyes the dazzling perspective of the king doing her the honour to hold her child in his arms at the baptismal font, Madame de Longueville no longer resisted; at least not more than all pretty women are accustomed to resist, and only defended herself that she might surrender.

Aramis pretended to believe in the reality of this opposition, and did not wish to think that he owed his success to anything but his own powers of persuasion.

"Madame," said he, "you wished to beat your brother, who is the greatest captain of the age; and when women of talent form any wish, they are always successful. You have succeeded. M. le Prince is beaten, since he can no longer make war. Now draw him over to our party. Detach him gently from the queen, whom he does not love, and from M. Mazarin, whom he despises. The fronde is a comedy, of which we have only yet played the first act. Let us wait for M. de Mazarin at the winding-up of the plot; that is to say, on the day when the prince, by your influence, shall be turned from the court."

Madame de Longueville was persuaded. She was so convinced of the power of those beautiful eyes, that she did not doubt their influence over the Prince de Condé, and she was not mistaken.

Athos, on quitting Aramis in the Place Royal, went to Madame de Chevreuse. Here was yet another *frondeuse* to persuade; but she was even less open to conviction than her young rival. There had been no condition stipulated in her favour. M. de Chevreuse had not been appointed governor of any province; and if the queen was to consent to become godmother, it must be either to her grand-son or grand-daughter. Therefore, at the first announcement of peace, Madame de Chevreuse frowned, and in spite of all Athos's logic to prove the impossibility of a longer war, she insisted on the continuation of hostilities.

"My fair friend," said Athos, "allow me to tell you, that every one is tired of the war, and that every one, except yourself, and perhaps the coadjutor, is anxious for peace. You will be again exiled, as in the time of Louis XIII. Believe me, we have passed the age of successful intrigues, and your beauteous eyes are not destined to destroy themselves by weeping over Paris, where there always must be two queens whilst you are here."

"Oh!" said the duchess, "I cannot carry on the war alone; but I can avenge myself on that ungrateful queen, and that ambitious favourite; and, on the word of a duchess, I will avenge myself!"

"Madame," said Athos, "do not, I beseech you, create an unhappy futurity for Bragelonne: he is launched forth into the world;

he is young, and the prince is favourably inclined towards him. Let us allow the young king to establish himself. Alas!—excuse my weakness, madame—a time comes when a man revives, and, as it were, grows young again in his children."

The duchess smiled, half ironically, half tenderly. "Count," said she, "I fear that you have been gained over by the court. Have you not some blue riband in you pocket?"

"Yes, madame," replied Athos: "I have that of the garter, which King Charles I. gave me, some days before his death."

The count spoke the truth; for he did not know what Porthos had asked for, and supposed he had only that which he had mentioned.

"Well, then, I must make up my mind to be an old woman," said the duchess, with a meditative air.

Athos took her hand, and kissed it. She sighed on looking at him.

"Count," said she "your mansion at Bragelonne must be a charming one. You are a man of taste: you must have wood, water, and flowers."

She gave another sigh, and rested her charming head on a hand coquettishly curved, and still attractive from its form and whiteness.

"Madame," replied the count, "what is it you have just said? I never saw you looking so young, or so beautiful."

The duchess shook her head.

"Is M. de Bragelonne to remain in Paris?" said she.

"What do you think about it?" demanded Athos.

"Leave him with me," replied the duchess.

"No, madame. If you have forgotten the history of Œdipus, I have not."

"Really, you are quite charming, count, and I should much like to pass a month at Bragelonne."

"Are you not afraid of making me greatly envied?" gallantly replied Athos.

"No; I will go *incognita*, count, under the name of Mary Michon."

"You are quite adorable, madame."

"But do not allow Raoul to remain with you."

"For what reason?"

"Because he is in love."

"He—a child!"

"Therefore he is in love with a child."

Athos became thoughtful. "You are right, duchess. This singular love, for a child of seven years old, may one day make him very unhappy. There is to be a campaign in Flanders: he shall go there!"

"Then, on his return, you shall send him to me, and I will cuirass him against love."

"Alas, madame," said Athos, "in these days love is like war, and a cuirass is become perfectly useless."

At this moment Raoul made his appearance: he came to inform the duchess and the count that his friend, the Count de Guiche, had told him that the solemn entrance of the king, the queen, and the minister, was fixed for the next day.

The next morning, in fact, at break of day, the court made all its preparations to leave St. Germain. On the previous evening the queen had sent for d'Artagnan.

"Sir," said she to him, "I am assured that Paris is not quiet. I shall have some fears for the king; therefore station yourself near the right door of the carriage."

"Your majesty may be perfectly easy," said d'Artagnan; "I will answer for the king." And bowing to the queen, he left the room.

On leaving the queen's apartment, Bernouin came to inform d'Artagnan that the cardinal was waiting for him on important business. He therefore immediately betook himself to his excellence.

"Sir," said he, "they talk of a commotion in Paris. I shall be on the king's left; and as I am the person who will be principally menaced, station yourself at the left door of the carriage."

"Your eminence need not fear," replied d'Artagnan: "they shall not touch one hair of your head."

"Zounds!" said he, when he had reached the antechamber,

"how shall I get out of this dilemma? I cannot be both at the right and the left doors at the same time. Ah, bah! I will guard the king, and Porthos shall guard the cardinal."

This arrangement satisfied every body, which is a rare occurrence. The queen had great confidence in d'Artagnan's courage, which she well knew, and the cardinal in Porthos's strength, which he had felt.

The cavalcade set off for Paris in an order arranged beforehand. Guitaut and Comminges, at the head of the guards, marched in front; then came the royal carriage, having d'Artagnan at one of its doors, and Porthos at the other; then the musketeers, those old friends of d'Artagnan's, of twenty years' standing—their lieutenant for twenty years, their captain the evening before.

On reaching the barrier, the carriage was saluted by loud cries of "Long live the king!" and "Long live the queen!" Some few cries of "Long live Mazarin!" were mingled with them, but they had no echoes. They went towards Notre-Dame, where a *Te Deum* was to be sung.

All the people of Paris were in the streets. The Swiss had been drawn up the whole length of the way; but as the distance was considerable, they were only placed at six or eight paces from each other, and in a single line. This rampart was therefore utterly insufficient, and being occasionally broken through by a stream of people, was with great difficulty reformed.

At each rupture, although it was amicable, and arose from the desire that the Parisians had to see their king, of whom they had been deprived for a year, Anne of Austria looked at d'Artagnan with some anxiety, and he encouraged her by a smile.

Mazarin, who had spent about a thousand louis to make them cry "Long live Mazarin!" and who had not estimated the cries that he had heard at twenty pistoles, kept also looking at Porthos with great anxiety. But the gigantic body-guard answered this look with such a splendid bass voice—"Make yourself easy, your excellence"—that Mazarin became more tranquil.

On reaching the Palais Royal, they found the crowd still greater. It had united its streams from all the adjacent streets, and they saw

all this vast population, like an immense swollen river, coming to meet the carriage, and rolling tumultuously along the rue St. Honoré.

When they reached the square, loud cries of "Long live their majesties!" resounded on every side. Three or four cries of "Long live Mazarin!" greeted his appearance; but almost immediately hisses and hootings most unmercifully smothered them. Mazarin turned pale, and threw himself precipitately back in the carriage.

"*Canaille!*" muttered Porthos.

D'Artagnan said nothing, but curled his moustache with a peculiar gesture, that indicated that his Gascon bile was beginning to rise.

Anne of Austria bent down to the young king's ear, and said to him, in a low voice: "Make some gracious motion, and address a few words to M. d'Artagnan, my son."

The young king leant towards the window. "I have not yet wished you good morning, M. d'Artagnan," said he, "and yet I recognised you well enough. It is you who were behind the curtains of my bed, that night when the Parisians wished to see me asleep."

"And if the king permits me," said d'Artagnan, "I am the person who will always be near him whenever any danger is to be incurred."

"Sir," said Mazarin to Porthos, "what would you do if all this people were to rush upon you?"

"I would kill as many as I could, your excellence," answered Porthos.

"Hum!" said Mazarin: "brave and vigorous as you are, you could not kill them all."

"That is true," replied Porthos, raising himself in his stirrups, that he might the better survey the immensity of the throng—"it is true: there are a great many of them."

"I think that I should like the other better," said Mazarin. And he threw himself back in the carriage.

The queen and her minister had reason to feel some anxiety, as

pecially the latter. The crowd, whilst it retained all the appearances of respect, and even of affection for the king and the regent, began to be tumultuously excited. Those dull murmurs began to pervade it, which, when they glide over the waters, indicate a storm, and when they glance along the multitude, presage insurrection.

D'Artagnan turned round towards his musketeers, and made them a sign, imperceptible to the multitude, but very intelligible to these choice troops. The ranks of the horses closed up, and a slight murmur was heard amongst the men.

At the barrier des Sergents, they were obliged to halt. Comminges quitted the head of his escort, and came to the queen's carriage. The queen interrogated d'Artagnan by a glance, which he answered by the same language.

"Go forward," said the queen.

Comminges resumed his post. An effort was made, and the living barrier was violently wrenched asunder. Some murmurs arose amid the crowd, which were now addressed to the king, as well as to the minister.

"Forward!" cried d'Artagnan, in a loud voice.

"Forward!" repeated Porthos.

But, as if the multitude had only waited for this demonstration to break out, all the feelings of hostility that it contained, burst forth at the same instant. The cries of "Down with Mazarin!" "Death to the cardinal!" resounded on every side.

At the same time, from the streets of Grenelle St. Honoré, and du Coq, a double stream rushed in, breaking through the slender line of the Swiss guards, and came like a tumultuous whirlpool up to the very legs of the horses of d'Artagnan and Porthos.

This fresh irruption was more dangerous than the others; for it was composed of armed men, and even better armed than the people are in similar cases. It was plainly perceptible, from this last movement, that it was not the effect of chance that had thus united a certain number of the insurgents at the same point, but the combination of an hostile mind which had organized an attack.

These two masses were each conducted by a leader: one of these appeared to belong, not to the dregs of the people, but even to the

honourable corporation of the mendicants; the other, in spite of his affectation of imitating the manners of the people, it was easy to discover was a gentleman. But both evidently acted under the same impulse.

There was a violent shock, which vibrated even to the royal carriage. Then thousands of cries, forming a vast clamour, were heard, interrupted by three or four shots.

"Forward, musketeers!" cried d'Artagnan.

The escort separated into two files; one passed to the right, the other to the left of the carriage. The one came to the assistance of d'Artagnan; the other supported Porthos.

Then a skirmish commenced, the more terrible as it had no definite object—the more melancholy, as it was not known for whom or what they were fighting.

Like all movements of the people, the shock of this throng was terrible. The musketeers, few in number, badly ranged, and unable, in the midst of such a multitude, to manœuvre their horses, began to be separated from each other. D'Artagnan had wished the carriage blinds to be lowered, but the king had stretched out his arm, saying,

"No, M. d'Artagnan; I wish to see."

"Your majesty wishes to see?" said d'Artagnan: "well, then, let him look!"

And turning, with that fury which made him so terrible, d'Artagnan made his horse bound towards the leader of the insurgents, who, a pistol in one hand, and a large sword in the other, was endeavouring to clear himself a passage, even to the carriage window, by struggling with the musketeers.

"Give way, there!" shouted d'Artagnan—"give way!"

At this voice the man with the pistol and the large sword raised his head. But it was too late: d'Artagnan's blow was given, and his rapier had passed through his breast.

"Ah! *ventre-saint-gris!*" cried d'Artagnan, vainly endeavouring to withhold the blow, "what the devil did you come here for, count?"

"To accomplish my destiny," said Rochefort, falling on one knee.

"I recovered from three of your sword-thrusts, but I shall not recover from the fourth."

"Count," said d'Artagnan, not without emotion, "I struck without knowing that it was you. I shall regret, should you die, that you left the world with feelings of hatred towards me."

Rochefort held out his hand to d'Artagnan, who took it in his. The count would have spoken, but a gush of blood stifled his voice. He stretched himself in a last convulsion, and expired.

"Back there, ye dogs!" shouted d'Artagnan. "Your leader is dead, and you have nothing more to do here."

In fact, as if the Count de Rochefort had been the soul of the attack that was made on this side of the king's carriage, all the crowd that had followed and obeyed him took to flight on seeing him fall. D'Artagnan made a charge with a score of his musketeers in the rue du Coq, and this portion of the insurgents disappeared like smoke, scattering itself over the place St. Germain-l'Auxerrois, and disappearing amongst the quays.

D'Artagnan returned to carry assistance to Porthos, should he require it. But Porthos, on his part, had performed his work as conscientiously as d'Artagnan. The left of the carriage was as well cleared as the right, and they raised the shutter on Mazarin's side, who, less warlike than the king, had lowered it.

Porthos had a very melancholy air.

"What an extremely odd face you are making there, Porthos, and what a singular air you have for a conqueror!"

"But you yourself seem much agitated, d'Artagnan," said Porthos.

"And reason enough for it, faith! I have just killed an old friend."

"Indeed!" said Porthos. "And who was it?"

"That poor Count de Rochefort!"

"Well, then, that is just my case. I have this moment killed some one whose face is familiar to me; but unfortunately I struck him on the head, and in one moment his face was covered with blood."

"And did he say nothing as he fell?"

"Yes; he said—'*Ouf!*'"

"I can fancy," said d'Artagnan, not being able to restrain his laughter, "that if he did not say anything else, that could not much enlighten you on the subject."

"Well, sir?" demanded the queen.

"Madame," said d'Artagnan, "the way is perfectly clear, and your majesty may continue your progress."

In fact, the whole train reached Notre-Dame without further accident. Under the gateway, all the clergy, with the coadjutor at their head, awaited the king, the queen, and the minister, for whose happy return they were going to chant the *Te Deum*.

During the service, and when it was drawing towards a close, a young rascal of a boy entered the church as if frightened out of his wits, ran to the sacristy, dressed himself hastily as a chorister, and, thanks to the respectable dress that he had just put on, made his way through the crowd that encumbered the temple, and went up to Bazin, who, clothed in his blue gown, and with his silver-tipped verge in his hand, was standing solemnly in front of the porter at the entrance of the choir.

Bazin felt some one pull him by the sleeve. He lowered his eyes, that were raised in a sanctified manner towards heaven, and recognised Friquet.

"Well, you young rascal, what is the matter, that you dare to disturb me in the exercise of my important functions?" demanded the beadle.

"The matter is, M. Bazin," said Friquet, "that M. Maillard, whom you know very well—the giver of holy water at St. Eustache——"

"Well, what then?"

"Well, he has received a blow on the head, with a sword, in the tumult. It was that great giant you see there, with embroidery all over his seams, who gave it him."

"In that case he must be in a very bad state," said Bazin.

"So much so, that he is dying, and that he would wish, before he dies, to confess himself to the coadjutor, who has the power, it is said, to remit all great sins."

"And does he fancy that the coadjutor will put himself out of the way for him?"

"Yes, certainly; for it seems that the coadjutor has promised him to do so."

"And who told you this?"

"M. Maillard himself."

"You have seen him, then?"

"Certainly; I was there when he fell."

"And what were you doing there?"

"I was crying out 'Down with Mazarin!' 'Death to the cardinal!' 'To the gallows with the Italian!' Was not that what you told me to bawl out?"

"Will you hold your tongue, you little rascal!" said Bazin, looking anxiously around him.

"So that, this poor M. Maillard said to me—'Go for the coadjutor, Friquet; and, if you bring him to me, I will make you my heir.' Think, then, Father Bazin—the heir of M. Maillard, the distributor of holy water of St. Eustache! Faith, I shall have nothing more to do than cross my arms! Never mind, I would nevertheless render him this service: what do you say to it?"

"I will go and inform the coadjutor," said Bazin; and he went softly and respectfully up to the prelate, said some words into his ear, to which he answered by an affirmative; and then, returning as softly as he had gone, he said—

"Go, and tell the dying man to wait patiently: his excellence will be with him in an hour."

"Good!" said Friquet; "my fortune is made."

By the way," said Bazin, "where did he make them carry him?"

"To the tower of St. Jaques la Boucherie."

And, enchanted at the success of his embassy, Friquet, without taking off his chorister's dress, which moreover gave him a greater facility of access, issued forth from the cathedral, and took the road to the tower of Saint Jaques la Boucherie as fast as he could.

As soon as the *Te Deum* was finished, the coadjutor, as he had

promised, and without even putting off his sacerdotal habit, proceeded towards the old tower that he knew so well. He arrived in time. Although growing momentarily weaker and weaker, the wounded man was not yet dead. The door of the room was opened, and he found the mendicant in the last agonies.

A minute after, Friquet came out, holding a large leathern bag in his hand, which he opened the moment he was outside the room, and which, to his utter astonishment, he found to be full of gold. The mendicant had kept his word, and had made him his heir.

"Ah, Mother Nannette!" screamed out Friquet, almost suffocated—"ah, Mother Nannette!"

He could say no more; but the strength which failed him in his speech left him the power of action. He began running desperately towards his home; and, like the Greek of Marathon, falling on the square at Athens with his laurel in his hand, Friquet reached the threshold of the Counsellor Broussel, and, on reaching it, fell down, scattering on the carpet the louis-d'ors which the bag disgorged.

Mother Nannette commenced by picking up the louis, and then she picked up Friquet.

In the meantime, the grand procession entered the Palais Royal.

"That M. d'Artagnan is a very valiant man, my mother," said the young king.

"Yes, my son, and he did your father good service. Make much of him for the future."

"M. Captain," said the young king to d'Artagnan, as he got out of his carriage, "Madame the queen has commissioned me to invite you to dinner to-day, you, and your friend, the Baron du Vallon."

This was a great honour for d'Artagnan and Porthos. The latter was quite transported. Nevertheless, throughout the whole of the repast, the worthy gentleman appeared to have his mind greatly preoccupied.

"But what could be the matter with you, baron?" said d'Artagnan, as they descended the staircase of the Palais Royal: "you had a countenance full of care during the dinner?"

"I was trying to find out," said Porthos, "where in the world I had seen that mendicant, whom I must have killed."

"And you could not manage it?"

"No."

"Well, then, try and find it out, my friend; and when you have discovered it, you will tell me, will you not?"

"Most assuredly!" said Porthos.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE CONCLUSION.

On returning home, the two friends found a letter from Athos, making an appointment with them at the *Grand-Charlemagne* for the next morning.

They both went to bed early, but neither of them could sleep. It is impossible to obtain the object of all your desires, without that attainment driving away sleep, at least for the first night.

The next day, at the hour appointed, they betook themselves to Athos's apartment, where they found the count and Aramis in travelling dresses.

"Well," said Porthos, "so we are all going. I also have packed up my luggage this morning."

"Oh, yes," said Aramis; "there is nothing more to do in Paris, since the fronde no longer exists. Madame de Longueville has invited me to pass a few days in Normandy, and has commissioned me, whilst her son is baptized, to go and prepare apartments for her at Rouen. I am going to perform this commission; and then, should nothing fresh happen, I shall go and bury myself again in the convent at Noisy-le-Sec."

"And I," said Athos, "am returning to Bragelonne. You know well enough, my dear d'Artagnan, that I am no longer anything more than a good and honest countryman. Raoul has no other fortune than my own, poor child! and I must go and take care of it, since I am in some sort only a tenant for life."

"And what do you mean to do with Raoul?"

"I leave him with you, my friend. There is going to be a campaign in Flanders, and you will take him with you. I fear that a sojourn at Blois might be dangerous to his young head. Take him with you, then, and teach him to be as brave and as loyal as yourself."

"And as for me," said d'Artagnan, "I shall no longer have you with me, Athos; but I shall have this dear fair-haired boy; and although he is but a child, as your soul completely revives in him, I shall always fancy that you are with me, accompanying and supporting me."

The four friends embraced, with tears in their eyes. Then they separated, without knowing whether they should ever meet again.

D'Artagnan returned to the rue Triquetonne with Porthos, who was still meditating, and constantly trying to recollect who the man was whom he had killed. On coming opposite the hotel *de la Chevrette*, they saw the baron's equipages ready, and Mousqueton in the saddle.

"Come, d'Artagnan," said Porthos, "quit the sword, and live with me at Pierrefonds, at Bracieux, or at du Vallon; we will grow old together, in talking of our comrades."

"No," said d'Artagnan: "plague take it! they are just going to open the campaign, and I must be there. I hope to gain something."

"And what then do you hope to become.

"A marshal of France, by Jove!"

"Aha!" said Porthos, looking at d'Artagnan, whose gasconades he could never thoroughly understand.

"Come with me, Porthos," said d'Artagnan: "I will make a duke of you."

"No," said Porthos, "Mouston does not wish for any more campaigns. Besides, they have arranged a solemn entrance for me into my estate, which will make all my neighbours burst with envy."

"That being the case, I have nothing more to say," replied d'Artagnan, who knew the vanity of the new baron. "To our next meeting, then, my friend."

"May we soon meet again, my dear captain," said Porthos. "You know that when you wish to see me, you will be always most welcome in my barony."

"Yes," said d'Artagnan, "on my return from the campaign I will come down."

"The baron's equipages await him," said Mousqueton.

And the two friends separated, after a pressure of the hand. D'Artagnan remained at the door, watching with a melancholy eye the departure of Porthos.

But at the end of twenty paces, Porthos pulled up short, struck his hand against his forehead, and returned.

"I remember now," said he.

"What?" demanded d'Artagnan.

"Who that mendicant was, that I slew."

"Ah, really? And who was he?"

"It was that fellow, Bonancieux."

And Porthos, delighted at having his mind free, rejoined Mousqueton, with whom he disappeared round the corner of the street.

D'Artagnan remained pensive and motionless for a minute. Then turning round, he saw the fair Madeline standing at the threshold, in some disquietude on account of his recent exaltation.

"Madeline," said the Gascon, "give me an apartment on the first floor. I must make some appearance, now that I am captain of the musketeers. But still keep the chamber in the fifth story vacant for me. There is no knowing what may happen."

END OF TWENTY YEARS AFTER.

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